

The SMART SET

Edited by
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and
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The SMART SET

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AND

HALF A HUNDRED BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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The
SMART SET
The
Aristocrat
Among
Magazines



And Satan Said: "Let There Be Lamp Light!"

By B. M. Steigman

AND God set the sun in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth. And the strong illumination was pitiless and smote into transparency all that was upon the earth. And the living things that moved, darkling, undulous, caressing, were seen as prowling appetites, and the lambent eye showed cold and cruel, and through the soft paw gleamed terrible claws. For the stomach and its adjunctions held everywhere their tyrannous sway.

And man by that sunlight saw himself the abject creature that he is, the crawler upon his wretched belly. And he groveled upon the ground after his kind, even as the cattle and the creeping things and the beasts after their kind. But into his nostrils had been breathed the breath of godlike life; and so he loathed his pitiless hungers and sought distraction; and he walked upright and sought with his countenance the light of heaven. But the light was fierce and

glaring; and man saw his nothingness and fell again into the dust. And there was truth shed from the firmament, and man durst not look up.

And the spirit of Satan moved upon the finite day; and Satan saw the light, that it was bad, and Satan said: "Lo, I know damned well that my principality is but the realm of darkness. But here an extension of my power is clearly necessary. The Master is admittedly an honest workman. Everything is systematically after its kind, like an all-over pattern. Of nuances He knows little evidently; of light and shade nothing."

And Satan said, "Let there be candle light and gas light and electric light." And straightway the alternatives of blinding daylight and purblind night were gone. And man could behold his fellow and yet not see the cruelty of the lambent eye nor the terror within the soft paw. And the undulous and

caressing movements he could no longer see as prowling appetites. And so man beheld his fellow and saw that she was good.

And man arose from the dust into which the great and burning truth in the firmament had cast him. And he approached his fellow and saw that her eyes shed their effulgence upon him, and that she was soft and tremulously yielding. And man breathed forth his joy and whispered in delight, Oh, Angel!

And Satan looked upon the lamp light and saw that it was good. And Satan

said, "Let there be lamp shades." And there were lamp shades of mysterious purples and bewitching greens. And there were lamp shades of gorgeous red, of tender pink, and of flaming scarlet. And man looked upon his fellow and saw her mysterious and bewitching. And now she was of ballet-gay vermillion, and now of languorous and boudoir rose, and now unfathomably deep maroon, and now passionate and crimson. And man stretched forth his arms, and in ecstasy and pain and fear and wild rapture, he cried, Oh, Woman!



Mirage

By George O'Neil

HERE in this land of windless distance
Where, fold on fold, horizons die,
Unshadowed through the day's existence
But for an arrow bird blown high,—

Through all this lividness and space,
Starkness of sand in cruel drouth,
There is the kindness of your face,
The cool clear flower of your mouth.



TO some people Washington Square is the centre of all originality in Art, Literature and Philosophy in the United States. To others it is the place where the busses turn around and start back.



THE national anthem—soup.



The Ashes of Illusion

(A Complete Novelette)

By L. M. Hussey

CHAPTER I

THE size of the city oppressed young Frayne, and this was an experience contrary to his expectations. At home, when the madness of art first possessed him, he used to look forward to the life in New York with an ardour like a neophyte's in some grave moment of ceremonial conversion. He thought of it as a promised land, the goal of dreams, the city of ten thousand illusions.

In those days he perceived the city in vague, grandiose visions: multitudinous streets, crowded, noisy, enchanting. He saw himself there, not exactly as a conquering hero, but self-sufficient, courageous and assured.

His sense of strength had remained with him up to the moment of departure, and was enlarged by the very difficulties of his venture. He went from home with little money, with no one definite to approach at the conclusion of his journey, and in disobedience to his father's wishes. These circumstances seemed romantic; they gave him an adventurous thrill. To go empty-handed to the struggle appeared a worthy price for his future success.

But the reality he encountered cast a shadow over his visions. Those crowded streets of his imagination became the real one of bewildering strangeness, full of unknown faces, indifferent if not unfriendly. His lack of means, his wanting in plans and knowledge, lost the glamour of adventure; he saw them as grave liabilities.

Yet he was fortunate, for he found work immediately, and work that was to a certain extent in keeping with his

ambitions. Moreover, he arranged to study. It was really a good piece of luck and he was astonished that his spirits did not respond gladly. Realizing almost at once the precariousness of his position, he could not fail to appreciate his good fortune. Nevertheless, the days of his dream beginning at last, he entered upon its enactment with a dull heart.

The day of his arrival he had done nothing toward the solution of his problem. He wandered through the streets, trying desperately to feel exalted, but in reality abominably homesick. Every thought of home seemed a gracious one—even the thought of his father. Frayne had left almost hating him, full of the fresh memories of his scoffing, his harsh derision, and his final, entire refusal to help. Now, in the remoteness of a thousand separating miles, he thought of his father, not as justified, but as no more than deluded; in the end his father would believe.

There was comfort in this thought, for it revived the memory of his ambitions. The afternoon of his first day was well advanced now and, under the stimulus of his somewhat revived sense of strength, he began to think definitely of his immediate problems.

The first thing was a place to stay, a room in which to sleep.

He sought out the shabbier streets, watching the houses for "vacancy" cards in the windows. He passed the first of these he found, discovering himself too timid to make the necessary inquiries. Before the next one he paused irresolutely for several minutes. At last he went up the steps and pressed the bell.

A harsh-looking woman wearing an apron answered his ring. She had a soiled white cloth tied around her head and this made her blue eyes look sharper and colder. She spoke with a slight Irish accent, an inflection of voice that dropped a tone or two at the end of every sentence, giving her words a depressing, lifeless air.

She showed him a back room on the second floor, full of old furniture, the padded sort, covered with frayed red cloth. However, the room was of a good size, but when he asked the rental he was astonished and frightened.

"Haven't you anything cheaper?" he inquired.

The woman appeared to regard this as an offensive remark, telling him that one couldn't expect to get something for nothing in these days. However, she led him up to the third floor, where he was shown a very small room, overcrowded with the presence of a single bed, two chairs and a bureau. He agreed to rent this.

He was left in possession. Now he took account of his circumstances. He had a little less than a hundred dollars in his possession and he had saved this and the amount already expended for his trip with great self-denial. It was necessary to get some sort of work at once. He knew no one. He was depressed and afraid.

That evening he went out, but remained on the streets only a short time. He was glad to return to the haven of the little crowded room, which was now his sole home.

He lit the gas, sat down in one of the chairs, and gave himself up to reflection.

He thought about his own people, his home town. He wondered what his father was doing, where his acquaintances were at that moment. Fully sensible of the distance that separated him from them, he was, for a time, the victim of his already familiar fears.

But gradually his isolation, his friendlessness, his entire self-dependence, lost their austere and forbidding character

and, little by little, his romantic sense returned.

Surely he would succeed! Even his father would be forced to the recognition of his success; some day his father would be ashamed.

His imagination expanded warmly, like a chilled flower that opens with the sunlight, and the future arose up in glamorous visions. He saw himself accepted, recognized, acclaimed.

He invented imaginary criticisms of his work. One critic said:

"Mr. Frayne might be called a real Greek—with reservations. Whilst he rivals Praxiteles in purity of line and fidelity to nature, he adds a beautiful modern touch, a hint of the complex modern soul, that is lacking from the pagan simplicity of the Greeks. He is without trickery. Of all modern sculptors, he is the most sincere."

By these agreeable exercises his forebodings were presently diminished. He already had a practical plan for the next day. He determined to go, early in the morning, to the Art Students' League, and try to persuade them to give him instruction in return for any sort of work he might do there. He went to bed with an easier heart.

In the morning he kept his determination. But it was an effort to do so. The pleasant fancies of the night before, those pictures of the days to come, those thrilling words out of the mouths of imaginary critics, had gone with the daylight. Realities returned. But he forced himself to his purpose.

He looked rather forlorn as he set out for the League.

His face was not striking and, with its peculiar expression of drawn anxiety, he hardly suggested the sort of man whom the future would recognize and honour. His mail-order clothing fitted him badly; the coat collar stood out an inch or two from the neck. He wore a slight, immature mustache, and the wind agitated its frail hairs pathetically; it trembled on his sensitive lip like something foreign and afraid. His blue eyes were anxious.

At the League he hesitated, as he had

done the day before outside the boarding house. Two girls passed him, went up the steps, looked back and giggled. He wondered if they were art students. Yes, they must be; he held them in awe.

At last he mounted the steps with the hesitating tread of one who delivers himself, at the appointed time, to the execution of a distressing and ineluctable fate.

Inside the big doors he saw a bare corridor leading back to a closed door and on the right an opened door that gave entrance to the office. He passed through this, removing his hat.

There was a girl behind the railing, who looked up as he came in. She raised her eyebrows in inquiry.

"I want to see somebody about studying here," he said in a low voice.

"What do you want to study?" she asked.

"Why, I want to learn to model," he replied.

"You haven't an appointment with any of the professors?"

Frayne shook his head.

The girl considered a moment.

"I guess you'd better go back to the modeling room and talk to Mr. Korbel," she decided, finally. "Just walk straight through the hall outside and through the door; you'll find it then."

His shyness increased, and it was a struggle to walk the length of the bare corridor, open the closed door, go down a short flight of steps, and turn, finally, into a large room white with clay and peopled with a hundred or more clay figures, amongst which moved three or four students—and Korbel.

Young Frayne recognized the master at once and approached him with a heart that seemed to beat incredibly fast.

He was a handsome man, a Czechoslovak, as Frayne learned afterward, and full of Slavic extremes. He could talk with a naïve fire in his brown eyes, impressing one with his passionate intensity, whereas, on the other hand, he frequently had moods of inaction and vague dreaming, inertias that appeared everlasting.

He looked at the boy with that quiet, somewhat searching courtesy of attitude that was characteristic of him. Then, hesitantly at first, but easier later on, encouraged by Korbel's sympathetic attention, young Frayne explained his desire.

"Have you ever studied before?"

He answered truthfully; he had not—but he told Korbel he had worked alone, at home, and mentioned his readings, and little by little impressed the master with his earnestness.

"It would be difficult for us to take you here," Korbel told him. "Just now, anyway. We give scholarships, that's true, but they're all held at present."

Frayne waited. A peculiar numbness came over his body, a species of despair mingled with fright. Why had he come here? His whole venture seemed insane now, the trip to New York, the foolish hopes, the sanguine dreams. He had no money, no friends, no help. Without these he was sure to fail.

He was ashamed. Under his dumb exterior there was a frightful impulse to run, to escape, to flee from that hopeless place. He knew that the students were watching him, and he felt that they observed him with contemptuous eyes.

But Korbel was murmuring something.

"Wait a minute," he said.

Finally he revealed his splendid plan.

"We might try something," he said.

"I could only offer it to you on condition that you were satisfactory; if not, then we'll have to give up the arrangement. I was wondering whether you couldn't learn something in my own studio. I could help you there. I usually have a man who keeps the place cleaned up for me, sees that the fire doesn't go out—you know, that's important in this weather, for if the wet clay freezes all my new work is lost—keeps the figures wrapped up in cloths, mixes my clay. Just now he has left me. I don't pay much for the job, but I could let you do some modeling there yourself, give you some instruction. That is, if I find everything satisfactory."

This proposal came to the boy's ears

like an unexpected prize drawn from a lottery of despair.

His pale face flushed, his sensitive, finely-cut lips trembled, his blue eyes became moist.

"I hope you'll try me," he said.

"Well, I will then. Come to my studio this afternoon. I'll give you the address and then we can decide definitely. I'm sorry I can't do anything for you here."

He held out his hand and Frayne took it gratefully. Korbelt walked away then, going over to one of the pupils, to whom he began to speak.

For an instant, before leaving the modeling room, the young man looked about him. Now, stirred and exultant, he sniffed the moist air of the place as if it were perfumed and delectable.

He saw the half-finished figures, set up on their armatures, upon which the students were working. A girl was modeling the figure of a nude, athletic man. Another girl worked upon a symbolic piece in which a man and woman faced each other enigmatically. Against the wall were scores of old studies, most of them clay, now cracked and broken. Here and there, throughout the room, unfinished pieces stood swathed in damp cloths like ghostly bodies arisen in their humid cerements. It was all enchanting; it was a place of dreams.

The young man turned at last and walked out with the air of one who has met with a great happiness.

CHAPTER II

AFTER the passing of certain depressed days, Frayne's fascination with his work measured up to his anticipations.

In the mornings he would enter the studio in a condition of mind like one who approaches a sacrament. The place had, indeed, a religious air for him. It was the reality of his ideals. It was his promise; it was his place to dream.

He always arrived before Korbelt. The master came late, sometimes, on days when he had classes at League, not until long after noon.

Now that the winter was closing in and frost came every night, Frayne had to keep a fire lighted in the big stove; his first task in the morning was to shake this down and burn it up freshly.

The studio was located in a sort of court behind a Fifth Avenue fruit shop. One entered through an iron door; there was a flight of stairs directly ahead that led up to offices on the floors above. Beyond the stairs a narrow hall ended abruptly in a door. Passing through this door one encountered a wide corridor, piled up with boxes stored there by the fruit people, and further on another door gave out into a small, dirty courtyard.

There was a tree in this yard, very twisted and bad-looking—the young man wondered whether it would have leaves in the summertime—and against the tree, like a confederate in the desolation of the place, was an old stable, forgotten by the city which had grown up around it, and so cut off from its designed use forever. Korbelt's studio was in the upper floor of the stable.

It was an unpromising place to enter, but, once through the door of the stable, the artistic atmosphere began to assert itself. The lower floor was crowded with pieces of the master's forgotten work; the most striking was a more or less life-size plaster cast representing Adam and Eve, standing amicably together with their arms entwined.

When Frayne first saw these things a lump arose in his throat, but when he mounted the flight of clay-smeared stairs and entered the studio proper he was entranced.

The studio itself, found in that old stable, had the touch of another world. It was a genuine work-place, and therefore everything was whitened with the dust of sifting clay; but Korbelt had interesting things there: finished and unfinished pieces of his better work, four or five straight-backed old Spanish chairs, very dirty, yet stately in their decay, a big, half-ruined Japanese idol standing hideously in one corner, and over the walls many photographs of

sculpture. In entering this place the young man felt a great joy. In these moments he was accompanied by the full assurance of success.

He soon learned the rudimentary technique of his art. The crudity of the armatures offended him at first; he felt a sense of indignity to art that one should begin a beautiful thing by bending up old lead pipe and pounding nails through it into an old board. But once the wet clay was heaped up on this armature the fascination began.

The master was a curious man. Frayne found him remote and puzzling. Sometimes he talked marvelously of art; the boy began to know the men that counted—Borglum, Daniel Chester, Paul Manship, Jack Gregory.

Korbel would pass from discussions of contemporary work to generalizations, to ideals of art.

"Art is an enthusiasm only," he would say. "It doesn't mean anything; it has no purpose. Because it has no purpose and it is essentially meaningless, it should be all the more precious to you; it belongs so much more to yourself; it is the evocation of your own desire. Everyone must have an enthusiasm. The best enthusiasm is art."

But, astonishingly, Korbel's own enthusiasm seemed to fail him at times. Often he was morose, silent; he would tear down a piece of work with an expression of contempt that gave his pupil a curious stirring of inward fear. These destructive moments affected him as if, in the simple knocking apart of a block of half-finished clay, there was expressed some fundamental and dire iconoclasm, a denial of the true gods. Often, after Korbel's attacks, he doubted himself.

Korbel helped him, showed him fundamentals, suggested certain simple things for him to model—but said little about his finished pieces. Frayne was anxious to receive a word of praise, even now, even so soon. As the weeks went by and the master was still non-committal, these wanted, praising words wove themselves into his imaginings.

He created them, like the writings of the critics upon his work; he put sweet sentences into the master's mouth.

In the main he was happy. Of course, he suffered many discomforts, and sometimes—tired at the end of the day—he thought of the ease of his home, recalled his father, the little town, his acquaintances, several girls he had known. Frequently his work was hard. He was the janitor of the studio, and after this the pupil. Yet he still considered himself lucky. He winced inwardly when he thought of the utter friendlessness of his arrival.

"Very soon," he thought, "I'll make a cast of one of my pieces and send it West. That will open their eyes!"

Of course, he had not yet executed anything worthy of this purpose.

CHAPTER III

ONE morning, working alone in the studio, he heard someone ascending the stairs, and, turning, found a large, foreign-looking man in the room, a man whom he had never seen before. The man asked, in precisely enunciated English, for Mr. Korbel.

Frayne told him that Korbel had classes that morning and was not expected until late in the afternoon.

The stranger smiled graciously and walked further into the studio.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Mr. Korbel and I are very good friends. I've been absent from New York for several months—I hoped to find him here."

He then regarded the young man in a friendly fashion and finally held out his hand.

"You're Mr. Korbel's assistant?" he asked. "We must know each other. My name is Kheiralla; that's not easy to remember, is it? It's an Arabic name."

The two shook hands, and the Arab looked about him approvingly.

He was tall, thick and dark. In spite of his solid appearance he was light in his movements. His face was more or less round, the lips thick, the nose wide,

the eyes small and black. His manner was polite, ingratiating.

Frayne was then copying a bust of the master's which represented an old man, with great mustaches, small, deep eyes, and an intellectual forehead.

The Arab smiled.

"I see you are copying the bust of my father," he remarked. "Mr. Korbel did that two years ago, and it's an admirable likeness. My father is still living; he stays alone here in New York and he's a very strange old gentleman. My name, Kheiralla, signifies 'Love of Allah,' and for fifteen years my father has been engaged upon a history of our ancestors. He claims descent from the family of the Prophet—it's a very interesting work."

Kheiralla then began to question the young man about himself and presently they were talking together freely. For the first time in his life Frayne was asked to state his purposes, his beliefs, his ideals, to one whom he felt could understand. His cheeks became warm, his heart felt large and expansive, and his enthusiasm shone in his face.

"I want to keep away from all the modern fads," he said. "And still I don't want to imitate the Greeks. If I can capture their loveliness of line and combine it with a certain modern thoughtfulness, I'll have something individual, a style of my own."

Kheiralla still smiled.

He nodded his head.

"Yes, you will," he said.

There was something faintly ironic in his vocal tone, and for an instant the boy was chilled. Glancing swiftly at his new friend he decided that the notion of irony was purely the result of his own sensitiveness. Kheiralla, it seemed, always smiled in that way; it was a part of his unfailing courtesy.

They continued to talk. The boy's emotions were a complex of pride, of satisfaction, of naive pleasure. He felt the reality of his enchanted world; the world of art. At home everyone had ignored him; here, a stranger, an older man, a gentleman, a man of culture, an Oriental, a foreigner—all words of ro-

mantic modification in Frayne's eyes—talked to him as an equal, listened to his ideas, accepted him. He felt cosmopolitan, and infinitely exalted over the commonplaces of his former life.

Presently Kheiralla, on the point of taking his departure, offered a charming suggestion.

"Tell Mr. Korbel I've been here," he said. "Meanwhile, I want to see you again, very soon. I have a little apartment uptown where my friends drop in almost every evening. Now that I'm back in the city, we're just beginning our little meetings again. We have some interesting people there, some painters and writers and artists like yourself. Won't you come and see me?"

Frayne was delighted.

"I'll come any time," he said.

"Any time?" Kheiralla beamed. "Well, then, why should you delay? Why not stop around this evening? I don't know who will be there, but we'll be able to talk anyway."

The invitation was accepted eagerly. Shaking hands with the young man, he left the studio.

When Korbel came in Frayne told him of the visitor. Korbel was in an atrabiliar mood. He only nodded, grunted unintelligibly and set to work on an elaborate medallion he was doing for the Czecho-Slovak Republic. It was a symbolic piece, and surrounding the figures in the center was an elaborate decoration in the manner of old lace which, instead of being modeled, was scratched in the mould, producing a work in the end of greater finesse and definition.

Frayne regarded him coldly for a moment and with a touch of anger. He admired the master—but Korbel was a curious man, and in many ways too cold and unresponsive for a true artist. The young man felt that he himself had much more of the real artist spirit: the enthusiasm, the eagerness, the warm responsiveness. "What can one accomplish without *feeling*?" he thought.

Korbel, he held, was deficient in enthusiasm. This, no doubt, explained

his silence as to Frayne's own work. He was loquacious enough in the matter of technicalities; he was willing to point out technical defects—but he never appeared to look for the soul in his pupil's efforts.

A sense of superiority came to the young man. No doubt he could never expect much from Korbel. He must find others, more responsive, more fluent of emotion, to understand him.

After his afternoon's work was over he hurried to his room in order to prepare for the appointment with his new friend. He had a bit to eat first, and then put on his curious mail-order clothes.

Nevertheless, he was an agreeable-looking young man that evening. His fair hair, long but not extravagant, was combed back into a pompadour; his enthusiastic eyes looked out with a naïveté of faith and expectation; his sensitive lips were smiling; his little blond mustache waved gently with every expired breath, lending an appealing, pathetic touch to his young face. He carried himself quite straight and erect.

It was early; he had more than an hour before he should really reach Kheiralla's apartment, and he decided to walk.

The evening was cold. A sleety rain had fallen in the morning and now the pavements and streets were frozen with a veneer of glittering ice.

Young Frayne walked up Broadway, moving cautiously along the difficult pavements in which the gaudy electric signs overhead were given a re-birth by the reflecting ice. The street was unusually brilliant. The crowds, emerging now for the pleasures of the evening, wrapped up in furs, in capes, in heavy overcoats, enlivened and stimulated him.

He no longer felt friendless in this city, and alone. He was at home in it, unappalled, sensible of its size, but thereby more expansive himself.

An idea came to him then for a great piece of sculpture. He determined that some time he would execute it. It would

be a piece on a grand scale, a picture of this city, its complex immensity. Something exhibiting a crowd such as this, with some focal point of dramatic attention; the idea was vague now, but it thrilled him. All through his body the zest of life and achievement stirred and sang.

He turned down Eighty-eighth Street and reached Kheiralla's apartment. He inquired in the corridor and was directed to the first floor. He approached the door and knocked.

Kheiralla himself opened it. He was smiling as ever, very gracious. He helped young Frayne to remove his coat, took his hat, hung them both on a rack in the narrow hall.

The visitor followed his host through the hall toward a room at the end, from which a girl's laugh emerged shrilly.

There were nine or ten people in the room, and Frayne found himself uncomfortably shy. On a little davenport in the corner a dark fellow, with slightly slanting, oriental eyes, talked vehemently to a young girl, who interrupted him from second to second with her laughter; it was her voice that had come out into the hall.

Another couple, an older man, and a tall angular brunette, were bending over a piano whilst the man picked out a tune with one finger.

In the center of the room a group of three girls and two men were sitting around a big disordered table, engrossed in what appeared to be some sort of a game.

Sitting alone, a little apart from the others, was a young, dark-haired girl who was turning over the pages of a book.

The Arab had preceded his guest; he turned now, smiling, and addressed everybody.

"This is Mr. Frayne, the sculptor," he said.

The two on the davenport did not look up; those at the table glanced at Frayne momentarily; the woman at the piano smiled at him faintly.

The girl reading the book met his eyes, nodded, and then resumed her

turning of the pages. Frayne was pleased with his introduction, but he felt that these people were very offhand in receiving him.

Kheiralla was speaking to him.

"We have no formalities here," he said. "Would you like to meet a very sweet little girl? Let me introduce you to Miss Hollis."

He led Frayne across the room to the side of the girl with the book.

"Miss Hollis," he said, "Mr. Frayne has a true artist's eye! He told me at once that he wanted to talk to you. Mr. Frayne, Miss Hollis is also an artist, a great writer."

The girl closed her book; Kheiralla abandoned Frayne to her mercies; for a moment they looked at each other without speaking. At last the girl addressed him, smiling a little.

"I don't suppose you told him anything of the sort," she said.

Frayne rallied from his shyness.

"But I *would* like to talk to you," he said.

There was something appealingly sincere in his words.

The girl's rather aloof expression softened.

"Then do pull up a chair," she said.

CHAPTER IV

THEY were seated side by side.

"You've never been here before?" she asked.

"No, I only met Mr. Kheiralla today."

"How do you like him?"

The young man was enthusiastic.

"Oh, very much," he said.

His companion frowned a little and for several seconds she was silent. Frayne studied her face, for her eyes were lowered, making his scrutiny possible.

She was pretty. Her brown hair lay close about her small head in glossy undulations. Her dark eyes were well defined by the long lashes that now almost touched her cheeks. Her face was a little pale. Frayne thought he could see something pathetic in her lips; when she smiled it was with a peculiar

touch of hesitancy. She appeared to be just a little uncertain of herself.

She raised her eyes, meeting his own.

"I don't share your feeling," she told him in a low voice. "I don't like to come here."

Frayne was surprised. His look made her explain.

"Maybe you'll ask me why I come then—well, a person can't be alone all the time. I get horribly lonesome. I hardly know anybody in New York. And I met Mr. Kheiralla just by chance and he invited me here; sometimes I can't stand being alone any more, and I simply have to come."

She paused an instant, leaned toward Frayne, and added, whispering:

"I don't trust him!"

The young man turned naïvely at these words and looked in the direction of his host. Kheiralla had just come in from the hall, bearing a tray of cocktails. He was smiling benignantly. Observing Frayne, he beamed upon him and crossed directly to his chair.

"You shall be first," he said.

Frayne shook his head. He had never tasted a cocktail in his life, and now he was afraid. Observing his refusal, the elderly man at the piano laughed.

"Don't urge him!" he called to Kheiralla. "Those things are precious now. Leave that extra one for me! There's no use teaching bad morals to young men."

The words annoyed Frayne, but Kheiralla parried them with a paradox.

"Don't say bad morals," he asserted with a smile. "It is the Prohibition we now have that really increases immorality. I'm sure many homes will be broken up on account of it, now the working man can't get drunk any more at his customary bar-room."

The man at the piano smiled.

"Do you mean they'll get a worse jag somewhere else?"

"No, no, Professor. Unhappily, they won't be able to get drunk at all. Instead, they'll go home every evening and sit by the lamp and look at their wives for hours and hours perfectly sober."

What a dreadful test! Do you believe the institution of marriage will survive it? Really, I think not! These are bad days for the future of the home."

They all laughed. Kheiralla passed on. The girl continued her confidences.

"I don't like the people that come here, either," she said. "Most of them pretend to be artists of one sort or another, but really it's all pretense; you'll soon find that to be true. They haven't the real artistic spirit!"

This was a familiar chord, and Frayne met her eyes eagerly.

"He said you were a writer. Do you really write?"

"Yes; that's why I came to New York. I felt that I couldn't do anything truly great at home; that I had to live, get the atmosphere of a great city. But it's hard when you have so little money. Of course, I could do cheap things and make a lot of money like the others do; I suppose I'm foolish for having ideals and making sacrifices, but—"

She broke off, looking about her with contempt. In that instant Frayne felt her profound attraction, the attraction of a real communion of interest, of purpose, of ideals. He began to tell her of himself and she countered with her own confidences. They were eager and glad, both delighted to find an understanding ear. Frayne told her that he was also poor, but she agreed that it was worth being poor, and taking the harder road, if thereby one gained a high purpose.

Nevertheless, she was a little sorry to hear of his poverty. She believed it would have been more romantic could she have met him, with his purposes and ideals unchanged, and found him with plenty of money at the same time. She sighed a little.

Frayne misinterpreted her melancholy.

"Don't lose heart," he said. "Recognition's sure to come!"

The angular brunette was playing a fox-trot and some of the others began to dance. Frayne and the girl pulled back their chairs close to the wall, but

remained seated, talking. She promised to come to the studio some morning.

"Korbel's usually teaching then," he explained. "I'd like to show you my work when he's away. I admit he's had a great deal of experience and knows all the technicalities—but what's cold technique without soul? I almost find it impossible to talk about artistic things with him, would you believe it? He's so unresponsive!"

She nodded sympathetically.

The evening passed with surprising swiftness. At last the girl said she could stay no longer. He found that it was late and told her that he would leave at the same time.

At the door Kheiralla cordially shook hands with the young man and then turned to his companion.

"You've monopolized Miss Hollis dreadfully," he said, speaking to Frayne. "Don't you know she's my little sweetheart? You must be more discreet, Mr. Frayne!"

The girl was frowning; Frayne was uncomfortable.

A moment later they were in the hall.

He took her hand.

"You'll really come and see some of my work?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, really. You're the first friend I've found. I don't want to lose you!"

He enjoyed the pressure of her hand within his own; it gave him a strange, agreeable feeling unlike any accustomed sensation. But finally she withdrew it and smiled at him.

"Good night, then," she said.

He left her, regretting the parting. He felt that she understood him. As he returned to his room he was scarcely conscious of the icy streets, the wind, the cold; he was thinking entirely of the girl and of his art, and in that moment the two intermingled intimately as if one were the complement of the other. His assurance was deep and strong. He felt the potentiality of high achievement beating in his pulses.

"Mr. Bertram Frayne, the astonishing young sculptor, is now exhibiting a figure that he calls 'The Modern Cythe-

ria.' In this work Mr. Frayne combines symbolism with reality in a manner that makes for striking originality, if we may not say genius. It is the figure of a woman who stands. . . ."

With these words of a future critic glamorously shaping themselves in his eager mind, he reached the boarding house and ascended to his room. It was very cold. He undressed quickly and went to bed. The happy dreams of sleep superimposed themselves upon those of his waking hours.

CHAPTER V

THE next morning he wrote a long letter to his father. This was the first communication he had had with his home, and he wrote it with a high spirit and some exaggeration; it was, too, a reproachful letter.

"You were very harsh with me, father," he said, "and unjust, and already it's beginning to be plain that you were very wrong. You told me I was crazy to think that I could be an artist, but even so soon as this people are beginning to recognize me. Last night I was introduced to a large party of artistic people, where I was received with respect. You may not respect me, but people that know something about art are better judges. Mr. Korbelt, my master, gives me the finest kind of encouragement, but I don't suppose you're interested in having me repeat his praise. It's too bad that a boy's own father can't appreciate his work."

To write these sentences was to believe them. Now his faith in his destiny was profound, and, recognizing his own worth, he felt a peculiar resentment toward those who remained blindly indifferent.

Korbelt had *not* praised him; Korbelt seemed to want nothing more from him than a sort of exalted janitor service, and for this reason he was beginning to find himself thoroughly out of sympathy with the master.

Now that he knew more, had a keener eye, sharper artistic senses, was Korbelt really a master?

He compared Korbelt's work with that of other men. Had his teacher ever done anything as meritorious as Daniel French's "Angel of Death and the Sculptor," or the more recently completed "Memory," both in the Metropolitan Museum? French's work was defective, and perhaps influence had something to do with the Museum's acceptance of his pieces; the marble "Memory" had a bad neck and worse feet, but it was superior, he believed, to Korbelt at his best.

Korbelt's female figures were wooden compared with Paul Manship's rhythmic Egyptian motifs, however much chicanery might be connected with Manship and his collaborator, Lachaise.

Korbelt had copied the Greeks in his time; his memorial figure of the girl at the fountain was done on Greek lines. Yet Frayne felt the superiority of Jack Gregory; he had seen the group of the harper and the tiger in the Schwab gardens, and this was truly admirable.

As for Borglum—what of his master's work could compare with the Mares of Diomedes, at the Museum?

So he acquired a sense of contempt for Korbelt's achievement, which was armour against his teacher's indifference. He had now begun his first ambitious piece, and when this had progressed sufficiently he was sure that even Korbelt would notice.

His difficulty was in the matter of a model. Naturally he had no money to pay anyone for posing, and finally he adopted the plan of stealing certain poses from one of the master's models.

Korbelt was working upon one of his innumerable pot-boiling dancing girls and at present there was a young woman who came to the studio three times a week to pose for the latest figure. She was not a professional model; Korbelt had discovered her on the street somewhere and persuaded her that her figure should be immortalized in art; she came to the studio finally and, after several days of preliminary shyness and hesitation, she mounted the wooden dais and the master began to copy her in clay.

At these times Frayne, in a remote

corner of the room, disregarding the master, worked feverishly to catch certain of her lines, to adapt her curves and postures to his own purpose. He was doing a poetic figure named "Temptation," which was to embody his ideals.

It represented a woman, standing among the gauzes of her fallen draperies, one arm extended upward, the head backward tilted, the eyes regarding an apple held in the hand of the upraised arm. He felt that this was at once symbolic and realistic.

Meanwhile, Miss Hollis had made her first visit to the studio.

She came one morning, as she had promised. He heard the step of someone on the stairs; it was a light, somewhat faltering tread.

He crossed the studio and then he saw her, half-way up, and afraid to come farther.

He smiled gladly and she returned his greeting.

"You're just like a hermit here!" she exclaimed. "There's no bell nor any formal way of telling you that I'm here; I was afraid you might not be alone."

They shook hands. She looked all around.

"How nice it is!" she exclaimed. "I shall make a story about you and this place with a ghostly sort of a plot. What are you doing?"

He led her across the room and they stood together whilst he showed her the sketches for "Temptation."

"The story of Eve, isn't it?" she asked. "And so that's the way sculptors work. What a lot of preparation! You do any number of heads and arms and hands and unmentionables until you get the lines that suit, isn't that the idea? It's like the plot outlines I make for my stories."

They began to talk about their art; Frayne felt his blood warm, as if from the congeniality of her presence there transpired a wine that passed his lips with the intake of his breath. They sat near each other on two of the carved, tall-backed Spanish chairs, speaking se-

riously, in low voices, in intimacy.

As she talked to him her lips lost their suggestion of pathos. The pallor of her cheeks was overspread with an enthusiastic flush. She was glad to find somebody responsive, someone to understand. She was glad to find any kind of a companion, for it was lonely in the strange city. And the circumstances of her visit excited her, for the coming here and the exchange of intimacies was an alluring unconventionality. This was the artistic life; this was the life of her expectations.

For a few minutes, when Frayne had exhibited the sketches for "Temptation," she had been disappointed, expecting a different sort of work. In these instants his efforts seemed a little crude to her.

But now her impression changed. It was plain that he was wonderfully sincere and devoted to his art with a fervour that had its passionate surge. Therefore she believed that she had underestimated him and failed to see his merits, knowing so little about sculpture. As she talked, her eyes wandered to the half-completed figure and its surrounding sketches. It became transfigured; she saw its possibilities.

They quickly abandoned the formality of "Mr. Frayne" and "Miss Hollis." He called her Helen and she called him Bertram.

They spoke of their first meeting again.

"I really detest Mr. Kheiralla," she said, "but I must be glad now that I went there, for otherwise I would never have met you!"

"It was lucky," he said. "I needed someone like you."

"I think we needed each other."

"Yes, that was it. There are so many pretenders. It is difficult to find anybody with the true spirit."

The camaraderie of these moments led them both to a mood of exchanged intimacies. They spoke about their lives; they repeated some of those things confessed on the initial meeting: they were both poor, they were both making sacrifices. Again and again they told

each other of the good fortune that had made them acquainted.

"It was the slightest chance by which you found me at Kheiralla's that evening. As I said before, I don't like that man."

"He annoys you?"

"Yes, he does annoy me! The old ogre! He tries to know young women; he believes he's fascinating. He wants to make a silly sort of love to me!"

Her words, imposing themselves discordantly upon the exulting harmonies of his mood, startled him. He was naïve enough to be surprised.

"He does? How ridiculous!"

"Yes; I wish I could avoid him in some way. I hate to absolutely tell him that he's disagreeable to me."

Urged by an impulse that he did not pause to fathom, Frayne addressed her with unusual earnestness.

"Oh, Helen!" he exclaimed. "Don't let anything interfere with your art!"

She seemed to be grateful for his words; she moved slightly in her chair as if to draw momentarily closer to him. She smiled, looking into his eyes. The exalted mood of both was restored, the knowledge of high purpose, the sense of high desire.

A ray of sunlight came in through the window, illuminating the face of the hideous Japanese idol in the corner; it gave the battered head a halo of gold. The girl turned as if startled; she saw that the morning was nearly gone and noon was at hand.

"It's late!" she exclaimed. "I must go."

She arose, and Frayne stood up, too, and they faced each other.

Neither spoke, for a curious silence possessed them both and it seemed the portent of a significant thing to follow. The girl looked expectant. The rose tint was in her cheeks again and the lips, as sensitive as Frayne's own, were parted a little; one could see an even line of shadowed nacre beneath. Frayne was uneasy.

He believed then that a conclusion was necessary, a parting more intimate than words, and the half-felt necessity

of this oppressed him. He knew that his cheeks were growing red, for he was sensible of their heightened warmth. Yet he could not act.

She broke the spell, holding out her hand abruptly.

"Good-bye," she murmured.

He took her hand, then walked with her to the head of the stairs and watched her as she descended. She passed out and in the silence of that place he could hear the sharp little taps of her heels as she crossed the desolate court outside.

He turned slowly.

"I wonder did she expect me to kiss her?" he thought.

That would have been exquisite; the thought brought with it a warm thrill. Then he clinched his teeth together firmly, as one does in a moment of resolve, and shook his head.

"We must avoid that," he whispered. "I must keep away from everything that will distract me from my art."

The resolution seemed to embody a definite renunciation. A sense of exalted asceticism came to young Frayne, stirring him like a passion. He felt a very abandon of sacrifice, and the knowledge of it gave him the assurance of a chill, hard strength.

He crossed the room and looked fixedly at "Temptation."

Suddenly he remembered that Korbelt would soon arrive; there was no clay ready.

He walked slowly to the big wooden box where the clay was mixed with water and kneaded. Today it seemed a degrading task, but he began its performance through necessity. How stupid was Korbelt! To keep him at this when he could feel the very pulse of inspiration beating in his veins!

CHAPTER VI

THAT afternoon, before the master's arrival, Kheiralla came in. He smiled graciously on catching sight of Frayne; the latter greeted him a little coldly.

Then Kheiralla examined his work and complimented him with warmth. These words of praise fell dulcetly on

the boy's ear and led him to regard the visitor with more tolerance.

After all, Kheiralla had been decently friendly; in a measure he had played an inspiring rôle, for he was the first to treat Frayne seriously, call him a "sculptor," praise his work. Helen did not like the man, but a woman's prejudice should not condition his own viewpoint. The Arab had been good to him.

Presently Korbel came, but did not work; he left in Kheiralla's company, and again Frayne was alone in the studio.

Then he remembered that Korbel's model was expected that afternoon. The recollection came to him with the knowledge of a personal opportunity. For the first time he could make use of her himself, to pose for "Temptation."

At once he was impatient for her arrival; it seemed impossible to touch his piece again without the model. He paced the studio restlessly, went a score of times to the dust-covered window and looked down into the court, listened for her step at the head of the stairs, started expectantly when false sounds deceived him. He was as eager as a lover who waits for his sweetheart at the place of rendezvous.

Then, at last, looking out of the window again, he saw her approaching.

He assumed a serious air, and as she emerged from the well of the stairs he nodded gravely.

The girl looked about her, expecting to find the master. He was not there; she regarded Frayne inquiringly.

"Mr. Korbel has gone for the afternoon," he said. "You are to pose for me instead."

Her face expressed surprise and some hesitation. In her visits to the studio she had never done more than greet Frayne conventionally. For her he had been negligible. She scarcely knew what his position was there, but he was looking at her now with a certain air of authority and with an indubitable gravity. She decided to pose.

When she was ready she emerged from the little dressing-room, which was scarcely more than a booth parti-

tioned off in a corner of the studio, and mounted the dais. Frayne approached to give her the pose.

She raised her arm as he told her; he said it was too stiff. He stepped up on the platform and adjusted her arm to the curves he desired. He drew back a pace and ran his eye up and down her figure.

"That will do," he said.

Their eyes met.

She was regarding him with curiosity, smiling a little. Her scrutiny startled him and deprived him of a measure of his aplomb. He dropped his eyes and almost stumbled from the dais.

A sudden nervousness gave him the feeling that he was trembling. She was not the sort of a girl to attract him, for in his little town he had known only the simpler, more naïve types, and one of this sort, a precociously sophisticated one, a girl who posed in this way for sculptors, whom Korbel had met and persuaded to work there in only the most casual manner, gave young Frayne a complex emotion of fear, made him conscious of a certain ignorance, a certain disadvantage.

On his first meeting with her she had given him a peculiar moral shock, a sort of shrinking, that made him dislike her. Then he had noted her bobbed hair especially, and a faint scornful curl to her upper lip that was distasteful.

Now she was questioning him; her voice had a touch of nasal coarseness.

"Are you going to take Mr. Korbel's place?" she asked. "You're his assistant, aren't you?"

He did not look up at her.

"No," he said. "I don't work on Mr. Korbel's pieces. You're posing for something of my own."

He retired to the turn-table and took the clay in his hands. Drawing it out into long, finger-like strips, he fastened several of these to his figure and began to model.

His nervousness, his singular touch of fear, passed and was followed by a growing delight. He was no longer an apprentice; he was a sculptor, doing his own work, following the apocalyptic

revelations of his own inspiration, and modeling from life!

The furtive stealing of poses and curves from another's model was passed; the model was his, posed for him. This thought of his former concealed efforts angered him. A deep consciousness of injustice stirred in his mind. Perhaps Korbelt was not the blind one he had supposed; could Korbelt be jealous?

That afternoon his enthusiasm appeared to be sufficient to carry him on endlessly at this work, without rest, without food. But presently he saw that the girl was tired; she rested; she posed again; at last he found that she was no longer able to maintain the pose. Without speaking he motioned her to step down from the dais.

She threw her silk peignoir, a present of Korbelt's, over her shoulders and walked toward the dressing-room. Frayne watched her disappear. In a moment, by some unfathomed means, her impersonality vanished and he realized that she was a girl.

The flashing glimpses of her ankles moving beneath the silk robe, the revelation of her arms, one crossed over the other that her hands might draw the peignoir about her, were swiftly and instantly significant. His intrinsic hostility toward the girl was not lessened, yet her femininity aroused him and set throbbing his heart, like a new rhythm in its beating, a curious ache.

Standing before his work, it was no longer an absorbing sufficiency. He scarcely considered it, for a strange, bewildering loneliness came to him, a complex desire.

The girl emerged from the dressing-room. She had run a rouge-stick over her upturned lips, her eyes were crudely penciled, her bobbed hair shook back and forth beneath a cheap little turban. Frayne did not look at her.

She paused, looking at his work.

"What is it?" she asked. "Miss Eve?"

Frayne felt that her question was flip-pant.

"I call it 'Temptation,'" he answered gravely.

She laughed.

"So I've been Temptation, have I?"

He did not know how to answer, and so he was silent. She looked at the figure a moment longer.

"Well, it's not so bad. . . ." she said.

There was a faint colour of contempt in her voice, and, although Frayne knew that her judgment was unworthy and negligible, he was nevertheless the victim of a depressing wave of discouragement. He did not answer.

The girl said good-bye and disappeared down the clay-whitened stairs.

Frayne stood motionless, staring at the floor. He thought, suddenly, of Helen. He remembered their parting in the morning and the instant when, hesitant both, they stood looking at each other, waiting for something, expecting an obscure, significant event. He saw her very clearly, almost as if the morning's moment were being re-enacted. Then he knew that he wanted her to be there again, that she charmed him, that there was in her very presence a curious sweetness, an ineffable allure.

Why had he not kissed her then, at parting? The thought that he might have done so intoxicated him, and intensified his new loneliness. He forgot about his artistic resolves, the austere necessity for the ascetic life. An intolerable need came to him, never experienced before.

Pacing the studio restlessly from end to end, he thought of her, imagined the next meeting, found her held close in his arms, heard her words of murmured sweetness, bent his lips to touch her own.

CHAPTER VII

THE next day Frayne hurried to the studio earlier than usual, for he hoped that Helen might come and he was fearful that he might be too late. Korbelt arrived unexpectedly about ten, and Frayne was forced to mix clay for more than an hour. Presently it was noon and she had not appeared.

For three days he hoped similarly and was disappointed, and then he began to

fear that in some obscure way he might have offended her. He scarcely thought of his art. He did not touch "Temptation." The model came and posed for Korbel, but he made no attempt to further his own purposes by her presence. She smiled at him a little sarcastically, but he ignored her.

Again and again he called out from his memory the incidents of Helen's visit, rehearsing them mentally like players their parts. He saw her crossing the courtyard, heard her step on the stairs, saw her pale face, with dark, wide-open eyes, emerge above the floor, watched her gestures, witnessed her smiles again, heard her words and perceived the little changes made by the play of her thought upon her face. He could find no flaw in this; surely she had gone away with a friendly heart!

Meanwhile there was no word from home. His father had ignored his letter. This did not surprise him, but in the end it influenced him, and in a measure tempered the distraction of his new wantings. Once more he began to work upon his figure, for in his father's silence he experienced the old sting of unmerited contempt; he would show the folks at home!

After all, since they had never admitted his ability in the days when he could do no more than assert it, why should they find him worthier now? It would be by evidence alone that he could convince them. How amazed his father would be to unpack a large box presently, lift out the plaster copy of *Temptation*—and realize that his own son had done this work! How ashamed he would be! How quickly he would admit his error.

One evening, after an afternoon of hard work, he decided to call on Kheiralla. He felt that he could endure his loneliness no longer; that if Helen herself were not to be found there he would at least be soothed by the agreeable atmosphere, be among people who gave him a measure of recognition.

He arrived early at the apartment. Kheiralla opened the door, beamed upon him, told him of the extreme pleasure

that his visit aroused. Frayne followed the Arab through the hall and they entered the familiar room.

There were only three people there, and he saw with an ache of disappointment that she was not among them. He knew two of the visitors: they were the angular brunette and the elderly fellow who had tinkered with the piano on the first evening. The stranger was a man, a sleek, dark-haired chap whose clothes fitted with astonishing nicety. He was a Greek, and was introduced as Mr. Doptoglon. Kheiralla called him Basil. There was nothing said about his artistic status. But Frayne received the usual pleasant fanfare.

"The famous sculptor has dropped in again," Kheiralla announced.

The angular brunette gave him a gracious smile. She, the older man, and Doptoglon were seated at the table, and she beckoned Frayne to bring up a chair and join them.

"We're studying our vibrations," she said.

He inquired about the "vibrations," and was told that this was the system of Pathagorus, by which, in some occult, astounding way one's name had a corresponding number for the praenomen, the patronymic, even nicknames. These numbers, in a mathematical process laid down by the vibrations, yielded, strangely enough, a further number. Then, being in possession of this key, you looked the ultimate number up in the book and it told you what you were and what you might do—a refined horoscope, in fact. They had the book there. In a moment the angular brunette was getting Frayne's vibrations.

The result was flattering, if obscure. He learned that he had an extreme potency, that his colour was green, which argued success, given certain conditions, that he had better avoid rash ventures, especially during the period of the Equinox, and that love would be his. In her vibrational office the brunette seemed to be thoroughly serious.

Afterwards they found Kheiralla's vibration and Doptoglon's. Then Kheiralla brought cocktails, the conversation

became general and, when Frayne was ready to go, his spirits were better than they had been for days.

At the door Kheiralla pressed his hand warmly.

"I'm coming in very soon to see how your statue is progressing," he said.

Frayne smiled modestly and thanked him.

As he walked home he found some of the old assurance returned to his blood. His work was nearing its conclusion, and he felt sure that it would be all that he hoped. As for the girl—they had had no definite agreement together about the next meeting; she was sure to come again; he knew that she admired him.

The next morning, whilst he was working alone in the studio, he heard someone ascending the stairs; he turned—and saw her standing in the room.

The commingled emotions reflected in his face, the surprise, the pleasure, the touch of fear, and the obscure expression there of more passionate feelings stayed the conventional greeting that was about to pass her lips.

Frayne did not move. The girl remained standing at the head of the stairs, one foot poised forward. The two looked at each other.

It was she who spoke.

"What is the matter?" she murmured.

Frayne lowered his eyes.

"I was so glad to see you," he whispered.

He began to walk toward her, and as he approached he could feel the strong beating of his heart. He drew toward her with fear, with the emotions one would have in nearing, under the urge of a blind necessity, a place of momentous encounter, a second of tremendous fate. He had no plan or purpose in his mind.

She spoke again.

"What is the matter?" she repeated.

He raised his face and their eyes met, and now they were very close. Her eyes seemed to enlarge, to dilate, to fill her face with a sudden, startled expectancy. In some way he drew her into his arms and found her unresistant there, for her head dropped back into

the curve of his elbow, her hat fell disregarded to the floor, her upturned face invited his kisses. He pressed her lips to his own many times.

"Why are you doing this?" she was saying. "Do you mean this?"

He looked into her eyes with all the tenderness of his heart, with the assurance of his believing youth, with the faith of one to whom illusions are still real.

"Oh, yes, I do!" he exclaimed, and found that his voice broke huskily. "I've thought of you every moment since you were last here, thought how wonderful you are, Helen! I need you. You've—you've given me something I never had from anybody else. You care for me, don't you?"

She raised her hand and he felt the thrilling touch of her slim fingers as she drew them caressingly through his blond hair. Her eyes were very tender.

"Of course I care for you!" she murmured. "You were the first understanding person I found in all this city. I think we were *meant* to meet each other!"

He slipped his arm about her waist; they began to walk slowly across the studio. She looked quickly over her shoulder and laughed a little.

"Suppose someone had come up the stairs a moment ago!" she cried.

"And seen us? I wouldn't have cared. I'd have been proud!"

She rewarded him by the warm pressure of her hand.

"So would I, dear!"

"Korbel or anybody!" he asserted.

"Yes, I would have been proud, too. There is a certain person I would have enjoyed having discover us."

They had paused in front of his work; he looked down into her face questioningly.

"Who?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No, tell me."

"That Kheiralla, of course!"

He was surprised and he withdrew his arm, facing her with a startled air.

"What do you mean? Do you still see Kheiralla? Do you tolerate him?"

She shook her head scornfully.

"Tolerate him! I *hate* him! I wish I had never seen him. He annoys me terribly. He comes to my boarding house, and if I send down word that I'm not at home he says he will wait until I come in. And then he sits in the parlour, and I get so nervous, knowing that he's there and wondering what everyone in the house will think of me that I simply have to go down. Then he smiles and smiles and tries to persuade me to go out with him, and it is dreadful to get rid of him. He called night before last and I told him I never wanted to see him there again. Maybe he'll let me alone now!"

The warmth of Frayne's emotions seemed chilled. His shoulders sloped down a little, he dropped his face, a little frown cut parallel lines between his eyes. He did not speak.

She regarded him a moment, and then, drawing close to him, put her arms up over his shoulders.

"Dear Bertram!" she cried. "Don't feel badly about that man. Surely you can't be jealous of him! Oh, do you really care for me enough to be jealous?"

It was not possible to resist the charmed seduction of her slender arms, the closeness of her appealing, upturned face. Abruptly he drew her into his arms and pressed her close to him.

"You're everything to me!" he whispered to her, and with these words he felt a sense of great and thrilling abandon.

CHAPTER VIII

Now they were seated near together, talking. As Frayne spoke to her, as he watched her lips moving in question and reply and heard the intimate sound of her voice, he experienced a feeling of gravity and age never known before.

His mind traveled back repeatedly to the days when he had lived at home in his little home town. These early recollections came up again and again to form the contrast with his present self, his present condition.

Although in actual time only a few months separated the present Bertram Frayne from the boy who had lived with his father, stifling his ambitions, subject to the degrading dictation of his father's will, the contrast of the two conditions, then and now, gave him the impression of age-long separation. He pitied the boy; the boy had known nothing.

How changed was his life! Near him sat a girl whom he loved, who returned his love; that fact alone made him old. A sense of deep responsibility settled upon his spirits. He wanted this girl, but, complicating his wantings, were his artistic ideals which her mere presence revived like embers fanned to flame at the coming of the wind.

They were discussing their future together; what their relations would be.

"I know you will succeed," she said, "and I must not prevent you, I mustn't stand in your way, dear!"

"How could you stand in my way?" he asked.

"Oh, you know that I could, or you'll realize it when you think a little. We can't be any more to each other than lovers, just now, anyway."

Like him she was thrilling with vague ideals of art, moved by the high phrases they coined for each other's delight. In urging him to live for his art a melancholy conviction of profound renunciation stirred her, gave her a feeling of proud nobility. Each of these two, indeed, struggled toward this deep renunciation.

"How unselfish you are!" he cried. "You think only of me! But I must think of you. Do you really believe that I would see you free, run the chance of losing you, if only *my* art was to be considered? There's *your* art, and I won't stand in the way of that, either. But please don't be impatient with me, Helen. Give me my chance. I'll show you that I can be successful! I'll soon be recognized. Then nothing can keep us apart!"

The moods of both settled into a mutual one of pleasing melancholy: they saw themselves as martyrs to high,

sweet purposes; they would sacrifice some of the precious hours of their love to their exalted dreams.

They confessed their situations to each other. They told about their poverty; they saw all the world against them, they saw the jealousies of those who would resent their rise; they felt that they could conquer anything.

They spoke one to the other in grave, low voices, in the quiet studio, with no one near to watch or hear, unless it was the battered idol in the corner, grinning monstrously with its ironic, wooden mouth.

And then at last it was time for her to go.

At the stairs they embraced, and as she dropped her head upon his shoulder after his kiss he felt her body trembling a little, and, looking down, was amazed to find her sobbing.

"What's the matter, dear!" he cried.

Her sobs ceased and she spoke with her face downcast.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said. "Somehow I was suddenly afraid. I want you so much; I hate to leave you. Our future seems so uncertain. Oh, forgive me if I'm a little frightened!"

He comforted her; they parted at last with smiles. Yet she had aroused a doubt, and after she was gone he was depressed for a time and success seemed far away. Did she, after all, lack faith? He could not bear to believe that, and, in order to forget, he began to work again upon his figure.

It was nearing completion now, and, with the end in sight, he put more and more time upon it each day. Helen came to the studio nearly every evening and then they repeated the phrases of which they were never tired. When he was alone Frayne worked rapidly in order to complete "Temptation."

He did not confide his purpose to Helen, but he was vastly anxious to get a copy off to his father. At last the work was done; he experienced the thrill of relief that comes with the completed task. One evening he made a cast in plaster.

The following day he boxed it care-

fully and expressed it to his father.

In a few days some acknowledgment would be sure to come, and Frayne felt confident as to its nature. At last his father would be convinced; he would no longer cling to those ignorant theories that denied Bertram's talent, he would, in fact, be proud.

Moreover, there would be more than a mere justification in this business. Convicted of past prejudices, of injustice, his father would more than likely make amends, would doubtless be willing to help him until his own full success made help unnecessary. The boy began to think in terms of dollars; after all, a moderate monthly sum would make him independent—and would give him Helen.

He pictured her in a modest little apartment with him, just a few necessary rooms for their first home. He saw her preparing his meals, watching his work, assuring him in moments of depression, ministering to his little wants. He glowed with the thought of their hours of love.

Strangely enough, he scarcely considered her art. No doubt she had some talent, but it would surely never be a barrier between them, taking her mind from his own concerns. Probably, once they were together, she would forget everything but her love. That was the usual course of women in the romantic books he had read.

CHAPTER IX

A DAY or two later young Frayne had a disagreement with Korbelt, which ended unfortunately.

Korbelt had been out of town for a few days, but had left behind him several unfinished figures, wrapped up in the usual damp swathings which it was Frayne's duty to keep moist. Unhappily, in his absorption with his own work, he had forgotten the master's.

He came into the studio one morning and found Korbelt there, and when he entered the master glared at him ferociously.

"Look what you've done!" he cried.

Frayne's eyes followed his pointing finger; one of the figures was disengaged from its swathings, and down the front extended a long, disfiguring crack. He had forgotten to wet the cloths!

"Look at that!" Korbel exclaimed. "Probably ruined! Hours of work to restore it, at any rate. What have you been doing, taking a holiday? Enjoying a little rest?"

Frayne blushed.

"I'm sorry. . . ." he murmured.

"Sorry! Does that help me? Is that any explanation of your abominable carelessness? What do you think you're here for?"

Frayne's face crimsoned and he began to explain, haltingly.

"I'm terribly sorry," he said. "I know I should have been . . . been more careful. I was so busy—I was working so hard I forgot. . . ."

"Working hard? What do you mean?"

"I was finishing my own figure. . . ."

Korbel glared, his black eyebrows drawn down until they seemed to obscure the dark eyes, the contracted pupils.

"A figure of your own!"

He swung his body around and pointed at the clay original of "Temptation."

"Do you mean that thing? So that was more important than my work, was it?"

Frayne was silent.

"Can't you answer me, young fellow?"

A sudden bitter anger welled up in the boy's heart, a sense of great injustice burned there like a fresh flame.

"To me it was," he answered in a low voice.

Korbel's eyebrows lifted, his eyes widened as if, in the low-spoken words he had heard an utterance too incredible for belief.

"Confound you!" he exclaimed. "Don't you know that you're a young ass? You're like a lot more of these so-called art students; you're a master over night. Study? No, you don't

need to study; you're bursting with genius, with great talents!"

He turned again and stared at "Temptation." Slowly he began to laugh, without mirth, devastatingly.

"How absurd!" he cried.

He looked at young Frayne, who stood before him in the impotence of mute anger and chagrin.

"When you came here," he said, "I told you I'd take you and keep you as long as you were satisfactory. Well, you're no longer satisfactory. The month ends next week; you've got that much time to find another working place and—another teacher!"

Frayne raised his indignant face and met the master's eyes.

"I'll be very glad to get out of here," he said.

Korbel shrugged his shoulders, stared about him at the four corners of the studio and then, taking up his hat and coat, walked to the stairs and disappeared.

That evening Frayne told the story to Helen. They discussed it gravely and at first she was frightened, but he seemed so assured, so confident, that her fears gradually lessened.

"Don't worry," he told her. "I'll have some good news for you in a day or two—a little surprise. I don't think I'll have to spend my good time mixing clay and wetting rags and keeping fires for anyone!"

He was thinking of his father. She questioned him, but he only smiled and told her to wait.

Later in the evening, at parting, she put her hands up, grasping the edges of his coat lapel, and looked rather shyly into his face.

"I wrote you a letter this afternoon," she said.

"A letter to me? Why?"

"It was—well, something I hated to talk about. Or rather, I asked you to do something for me that somehow I couldn't bring myself to ask to your face."

He became concerned; he felt a touch of fear.

"Tell me what it is," he inquired.

"No, you must read the letter. Don't worry!"

He returned to his boarding house in a depressed mood.

The next morning he hurried to the studio, and in the outer hall of the building, in a box provided for that purpose, found the letter addressed to him.

He opened it on his way through the corridor and, standing out in the littered courtyard, read her words.

It was an accusation against Kheiralla.

"You were so angry," she said, "when I first told you about him that I was afraid to tell you this when we were together for fear, with me there, you would rush away and get yourself into some dreadful trouble. Also, I was ashamed, dear. Can you understand that? I was ashamed because I hadn't been able to get rid of that man, ashamed that I had ever let myself know him.

"He came to the house the other night and I went down to tell him that this was the last time he could ever speak to me; I wanted to tell him about you. I did, and he laughed!

"It made me terribly angry. I stood up and told him good evening and turned to go out of the room, and then he sprang up from his chair and caught me about the shoulders and turned me around and tried to kiss me. I had a dreadful time to get away from him without making a noise and attracting the attention of everybody in the house, which would have killed me with shame. He tore my dress holding on to me. I told him he was despicable and a brute and he only laughed at me.

"As I left the room he said he was coming again and that I'd better forget all about that 'young ass'—that's the way he referred to you. And you thought he was friendly. Oh, I wish you would write him a letter and just tell him what you think. I don't know what to do. He frightens me. He's so horribly persistent and at the same time I can't afford to make a scene here in this house."

Reading this, Frayne's rage was

boundless. He crumpled the letter in his hand, thrust it into his pocket and hurried out of the studio.

On Fifth Avenue he took an uptown bus.

Reaching Kheiralla's apartment house, he hurried through the corridor and knocked violently at Kheiralla's door.

A moment later he heard a step inside, the door was opened, and Kheiralla stood there smiling at him.

"A delightful surprise!" he cried. "Come in!"

Frayne followed him into the hall and then stopped.

"I want to talk to you!" he exclaimed.

The Arab turned sharply and looked at him with an expression of polite, somewhat surprised interest.

"Won't you come in and sit down?" he asked.

"No. I can say what I have to say right here. And that is that you've got to let Miss Hollis alone, Mr. Kheiralla! I know all about your persecution of her. Well, you'd better stop it!"

Kheiralla's suavity was scarcely modified, unless it was by a slight lifting of his eyebrows.

"My dear friend!" he exclaimed softly, "I believe I knew the young lady before you. Don't you think you're intruding a little in something that's not quite your affair?"

Frayne glared at the man in front of him.

"I don't care how long you've known her!" he cried. "You're not going to know her any longer, and I say so. You'd better look out, that's all I have to tell you!"

Kheiralla laughed, baring two rows of regular, slightly discoloured teeth. There was something irrationally disconcerting in his laugh, something that deprived the boy of a measure of his assurance, that made him obscurely conscious of his youth, something sardonic, like a veiled criticism that put him at a disadvantage.

Kheiralla made a little deprecating gesture with his plump hands.

"How foolish you young men are!" he said. "I thought well of you, Mr.

Frayne. I like young people, young art students. I was hopeful for you . . ."

"What do you mean?" Frayne demanded.

"I've been disappointed," he went on. "I saw Mr. Korbel yesterday and he told me that there was no hope for you; unhappily, you have no talent. Let me give you the advice of an older man, almost a father. Go back to your own people, Mr. Frayne, and don't waste any more of your time. Some time or other we all make mistakes and must recognize them. You must not try to be a sculptor any longer. As for Miss Hollis, she's a very pleasant young lady, but—try to forget her."

He was smiling again. Frayne felt a feral impulse to leap upon him, batter his face, beat the smile from those thick lips with his clenched fists. Yet, in spite of his immense anger, the smile disarmed him. It was vague, it was sardonic, it implied a secret, devastating truth. Muttering phrases of incoherent threats, the boy turned to the door and strode out of the odious apartment.

He did not return to the studio that day. All afternoon he wandered through the streets, and in the evening he returned to his room sick and faint with a throbbing headache. He lay down on his bed and fell asleep almost immediately.

CHAPTER X

FRAYNE awoke in the morning without a headache, but his spirits were very low. Kheiralla's words, the words that denied the fulfillment of all his dreams of art, repeated themselves in his memory like an accusation that no reasoning will disallow. Again and again he tried to defend himself with an armour of scorn that was ineffectual, since it depended upon his weakened assurance. Everyone was against him.

"I'll show them all!" he muttered to himself.

But might he not be wrong?

After dressing, he went out for breakfast and then, without plans, began to walk down Fifth Avenue. Work was impossible, and he decided not to

go to the studio. Let Korbel rage! He cared nothing for Korbel or any of them!

But, tired—of his aimlessness, he changed his decision and turned in at last at the familiar iron door. In the letter-box he looked idly for mail. He was surprised to find a letter for himself.

In a moment he recognized the envelope. It was one of his father's, badly printed; the name was in the corner: "J. R. Frayne, General Merchandise."

Eagerly he tore open the flap, withdrew the letter, read the message.

Then, with a gesture of rage, he ripped the sheet into many pieces, dropping them upon the floor.

"Dear Bertram," his father began. "I am astonished and pained. A box came here and it had a plaster statue you made that shows just how far you've gone on the wrong road. Is that what you went to New York for—to make immoral statues of women without any clothes on? Is that the thing you wanted to do, talked about, disobeyed me to practice? I am shocked, deeply. I never thought a son of mine, a member of a family that has had a name for honest, upright living for three generations in this town, could fall so low as to spend his days in such immoralities.

"My boy, I feel that you must obey me now or I must forever forget that such a son of mine is bringing shame to an honorable name. Destroy every immoral statue your deluded hands have made in the sin of your disobedience. Come home to me at once and work here like an honest man in the store. Find some nice girl and settle down and earn an honorable living for yourself and your family. I will expect you within one week, and if you do not come by that time, never write to me or expect to hear from me again."

The torn pieces of the letter fluttered along the floor and Frayne, walking slowly ahead, abandoned them. His flaring anger subsided, like a spent flame. At his temples a confused throbbing beat monotonously; he stumbled on, mechanically, without seeing.

He crossed the court; he mounted the studio steps.

Within the studio he saw a figure huddled in one of the high-backed carven chairs. It was a girl; her face was buried in her hands, she was sobbing. Staring an instant, he recognized her: it was Helen.

She heard his step and raised her face. Her cheeks were wet with tears.

"Oh, why have you been so long," she cried. "I thought you were never coming!"

He looked at her without smiling; the confusion of his emotions, mixed with his surprise at her state, made all his body numb.

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

She was drying her cheeks with a small, compressed handkerchief.

"I didn't intend that you'd find me crying," she said. "It came on me so suddenly, sitting here, waiting. I was thinking. Everything is so hard! Oh, I can't help it, Bertram. I'm miserable today, no courage, nothing. I feel I'm a frightful failure. This morning my very last story was returned to me, without a word, just a printed slip. I worked on it so long, so hard. I know I can't write! . . ."

She dropped her eyes and stared down at the whitened floor. Frayne approached her slowly, looking down at her. Out of the confusion of his emotions a determination shaped itself. His cheeks flushed slowly and, as if in a miracle, the burden of his black oppression began to lift itself, like a palpable weight withdrawn from his tortured spirits.

At last he had reached a true renunciation.

He dropped down at her side, took her hands in his own, pressed her slim fingers against his palms.

"Dear sweetheart," he murmured, "we must get married."

For a moment she still stared at the floor, then, raising her face, she met his eyes with a startled widening of her own.

"What do you mean? How can we? Your art, your—"

"My art!"

The exclamation passed his lips, followed by a bitter laugh.

"I'm never going to model anything again," he said. "I'm a failure, too. I have no talent. . . ."

A shocked expression superseded that of her surprise, but before her words could deny his blasphemy he spoke again.

He told her of his father's letter, of his black doubts, of his final conviction that had come just in that moment.

"I'm going back," he said. "Back home, dearest; you must come with me! Father wants me to find a nice girl—he hasn't any idea how sweet and dear you are! There's plenty of work for me there; we'll have our home, our love. . . ."

In a moment they were in each other's arms. She kissed him tenderly, she ran her caressing fingers through his hair—and she gave her assent.

Looking into her joyful face he felt his last great pang and hurt. How easily she accepted his abandonment of his dreams! Then, like the others, she had not believed either!

But in a moment his depression was vanished and he was happy again. An old familiar exaltation stirred him. The habit of believing himself an artist could not pass in such an abrupt denial. After all, was not love an art? How wonderfully he and Helen would love each other!

Out of the ashes of the dead illusion arose, like the fabled bird, a new. He was young; he was believing. Illusions were his necessity, the companions of his hours. Love, too, was an art; the art of arts!

In low-spoken words he began to explain his thought to the girl, and she gladly agreed with him. Sweet, glamorous days lay endlessly before them.

Youth was endless.

They decided to leave for his home next day, for now there was nothing to keep either of them in this city of New York.

(The End)

The End of the Story

By Vincent Starrett

A LEISURELY young man, distinguished (if at all) by dark tan Oxfords and a cravanette of the same colour, climbed the long stair at the Market Street terminal and claimed the rearmost seat in a waiting train. He was a familiar figure to the train crew. Every evening he walked some blocks out of his way to catch this particular train and to capture this particular seat. With less walking he might have found a station nearer his office.

The young man felt, however, that while circumstances forced him to ride on Chicago's most hideous institution, the Oak Park Elevated Line, at least he would make certain of a seat; while he was about it, a desirable seat. The rearmost seat of the side benches is most desirable because one need suffer the company of a fellow human only on one side; on the other side is the final window, and an interesting view of fleeting rails and belching chimneys. As a student of local colour, and something of a philosopher, all this appealed to the young man.

By the time the train left the station every seat was occupied and many persons were standing. These were of either sex and, strictly speaking, they were not standing—not all of them. They were swinging limply from straps, with the grotesque occasional jerkings of hanged men. As the train suddenly started, they fell rigidly south and east, with an oblique downward swing, jerked, recovered, and came back to position like marionettes.

At the station beyond the terminal others piled in, and, unable to find straps, clung to the floor cleats with their toes, or to their neighbors with their fingers. From time to time an ani-

mated gargoyle in uniform flung back the entrance door and shouted unintelligible insults. . . .

The young man in the dark tan Oxfords, immersed in a newspaper, impartially ignored all. It had all been recorded long since in his notebooks, from which, indeed, the foregoing impression is wholly derived.

Three stations beyond the terminal an attractive young woman entered the coach and eased herself through the jam to the end of the car—a difficult journey. It had occurred to her that the rear door might be untenanted, and that she might utilize it to brace her back. But it was already occupied by an Amazon whose shopping had kept her in the Loop into the rush hour, and who was now hastening home two lengths ahead of her husband.

The young woman sighed and pushed against the knees of the young man in the dark tan Oxfords. Thus braced, she fixed her not unpleasant eyes upon a collar advertisement and fell into a reverie.

She was aroused by the young man whose knees served to steady her own. He was gallantly attempting to rise. When he had accomplished this feat, he motioned her into the vacated aperture in the heaving line.

Seizing a strap, he added himself to the strange collection of swinging bodies. He turned his newspaper up around his ears and rocked back and forth on his dark tan shod feet. Occasionally, as the train swung round a curve, he sagged forward, and the knees of the young woman who now held his seat pushed little impressions into his own.

This, while not a new experience, was

always interesting, and he made a mental note of his emotions. When he reached his rooms they would go down in the note-books for future use. He was a story-writer for the magazines. He did not seek bizarre experiences, but he took what came to him, thankfully, and with intelligence.

The young woman paid him no more attention than she had given the collar monstrosities. She recalled him, with a smile, however, next evening, as again she slid through the rabble to the end of the rear car. She did not expect to find this same young man, but that the incident might be repeated by another young man was a grateful possibility. It was repeated by the young man in dark tan Oxfords, whose eyes smiled rather whimsically into hers as she sank into his seat. Vaguely embarrassed, she avoided his eyes throughout the remainder of the journey. He left the train in the suburbs, one station before she herself alighted.

It was with a sort of breathless bravado that the young woman pushed through the pack to the car end on the third evening. The young man saw her coming, and was standing when she reached her destination.

"Thank you!"

She merely breathed this, and felt that she had blushed.

"Not at all," he replied simply, as his newspaper engulfed him.

The young woman felt that something further was required of her; that she ought to converse with him. He lent no encouragement to this program, being unwilling, doubtless, to force his attentions upon her. If they were to talk, it was manifest that she would have to talk first. They did not talk.

As he left the car end, at the approach to his station, he nodded almost imperceptibly. She returned the gesture, but could not be sure that he had caught it. She hoped he had; she would not have him think her ungrateful.

She was resolved, however, that on the fourth evening she would stand. She would stand in another car. The first courtesy had been pleasant, and the

second a happy coincidence; but three times had made it almost a habit. A fourth imposition, she felt, would amount to an invitation. He might very well think curious thoughts about her. She resolved firmly not to go into the last car at all. Why she broke this excellent resolution was not entirely clear to her, but, after a moment of indecision on the platform, she went to his car-end like a homing pigeon.

This time, though, she spoke. She had to.

"I don't know what you will think of me! Do you occupy this seat *every* night?"

"Every night," he assured her. "Please consider it yours. I like to think that I hold it in trust for you."

The rest of the conversation was sporadic, unsatisfactory, and inconsequent. He seemed very nice, although ordinary. Obviously, he was not curious. He had not asked her name or where she lived. Probably he was married. His attitude was baffling; his lack of curiosity almost embarrassing, if not humiliating. Realizing that she would have been less interested in him had he done the things she expected, still she chided him and was troubled. She felt that her maidenliness was in danger; that she would herself say something impertinent or rash, if he did not soon treat her less like an elderly woman with a child, to whom casually he had yielded his seat.

They met upon the street, in the evening.

"Do you care to walk?" he asked.

"Of course," said the young woman frankly, "but first I must know who you are. I seem to know you quite well, while actually I don't know you at all. Who are you?"

His arm was through hers. Their eyes met. His were quizzical. The dark tan Oxfords creaked as he bowed.

"You know who I am. I am the man who gives you his seat, every evening, at the Clinton Street station."

She laughed.

"How absurd! Yet it is the exact truth, isn't it, and, in a sense, sufficient."

"That is really very clever of you,"

he returned, with a nod of commendation. "You take my point perfectly. If I tell you I am John Smith, you are really no wiser than you were, and if I narrow the field by telling you I am Horace Dangerfield, you think I am romancing."

"Why?"

"The name is too impossible, unless you are incorrigibly romantic."

"You are very funny."

"Of course. Actually, my name is Morgan Richardson, perhaps a happy medium between the two suggested. But what does it tell you, after all? It is no certificate of character because it sounds honest, nor have you any more proof of its authenticity than before."

"And you have no curiosity to know my name?"

"None in particular. It will be a convenience to know it, if our acquaintance is to be of any duration, but it is unimportant. Indeed, I may not like it."

He was whimsically smiling again, and she blushed a little.

"You are beautifully frank," she said at length, "but I think I prefer to tell you that my name is Virginia Armstrong."

"Virginia and Dorothy are almost inevitable, aren't they. A really tuneful melody— Is that tautological?— usually is played to death by the hand-organs."

"What a cynical philosopher you are! Have you a philosophy of names?"

"I am a collector of names. I write stories for a living."

"Really?"

"Quite really!"

They began to stroll in a convenient ribbon of parkway. It was turning dark.

"I have never heard of you," she said after a moment.

"Many have not."

"Do you mind?"

"Oh, very much!"

They both laughed.

"I like you better now," said the girl. "Shall you make a story of our meeting?"

"Why not?"

"It is hardly very romantic."

"Life is only romantic in fiction. I—a realist—supply the romance. A commonplace meeting becomes romantic when coloured by imaginings, or by the professional writer who knows what *should* happen, whether or not it does."

"Shall you make me beautiful?"

"At least, I shall have you ask the question."

"That would be—just reporting our conversation."

"Yes, this is the story. We are living it now. I wonder how it will end."

She recalled the magazine stories of recent experience, and blushed.

"I am naturally a bit interested in your latest 'heroine'."

"So am I," echoed the story-writer heartily.

They found a bench in the strip of parkway.

"Let us sit down," he said.

"Did you think of me as so much—'material'—when you gave me your seat?"

"Not the first time. I hardly looked at you—well, that's hardly true, either. But I did not suppose I should see you again. And I have given up my seat before. The experience was neither new nor thrilling."

"When did you?"

"The second time, perhaps. Then I foresaw the possibility of a third meeting, and a fourth, and then—this!"

"It seems that I had no chance to escape you. You have a wide imagination. It is a comfort to know that, while I was reproaching myself, it had all been arranged and could not be avoided."

She laughed wickedly. The story-writer grinned.

"You have no idea of the scope and fervour of my imagination," he said.

"No?" She was startled, but interested.

"No! There were your knees, for instance. They pushed into mine as I stood there in the aisle. . . . I did not realize until now that your eyes are blue."

The girl's breath came quickly.

"It is very dark," she said, "to be sure. . . . Did you foresee this, too? That we should sit here and talk in this scandalous fashion?"

"Of course!"

"And you foresaw that I would acquiesce, and believed there could be no hitch in your program?"

The story-writer laughed at her change of tone.

"No," he answered, candidly, "not entirely. Until recently, perhaps. Now I know how fortunate I am in my heroine, whom I respect quite heartily."

"I wonder!" she said, and leaned for-

ward in the darkness to see if he were laughing.

As she did so his arm was passed quickly about her shoulders. After a breathless moment, their lips clung.

She turned in his embrace, after a time.

"This is how they all end, isn't it?" she murmured, and listened with a sort of glad fear for his answer.

He crushed her against him furiously.

"In the magazines," he laughed, with queer triumph. "They have to. The editor insists upon it. The whole story is never told, although if the writer is clever he offers hints. Oh, yes, this is the end of the *story*!"



Another Bolshevik Bagged

By George Seibel

THE policeman raised his club as he scanned the little book that he had taken from the suspect's pocket. Then he read:

"Ah, love, could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire."

The club descended. Then he put the little red volume of Omar Khayyam into his pocket.

"Another conspiracy nipped," he congratulated himself. "It's one of them Soviet Bolsheviks. Don't mention names, but 'Him' must be Lenin. I'll search the guy. Maybe this is Omar himself."



RADICAL: one who believes in the use of dynamite. Conservative: one who would rely on rope.



DESPITE all that has been said against whiskey, it always did what was expected of it.

A Question of Values

By Edith Chapman

I

MRS. BEVERLY stood by the telephone, a little stunned by the telegraph message that had just been delivered her:

"Am playing in Chicago. Will arrive tomorrow morning for flying visit. Karen."

It was a good many years since she had seen her sister-in-law; they had, in fact, met scarcely at all since the time when that same sister-in-law had been her most intimate friend, and she herself hadn't been married.

She still had a photograph of the girl as she had looked then. Tall, very dark, very slight, with a little tender face set upon a long throat at a drooping angle; a surprisingly white complexion for one so dark; small features that held their own, however, even under the cloud of her black curly hair.

Karen's face had always reminded her in those days of the famous Lorna Doone picture. It had the same extravagant, romantic quality, the same innocence, the same almost incredible loveliness. A very different Karen from the one she had been following of late in the theatrical magazines. It wasn't that she had changed much in any outward particular. She appeared to have kept her slenderness, to have attenuated herself, if anything; she was no less beautiful. But the intrinsic values of the face had changed. That former haze of tenderness, almost helplessness, was missing—the romantic quality. The features stood out sharp and positive; the curved mouth was more firmly outlined; its smile now never shifted; the eyes had lost their clairvoyance. Was it simply that the

child in her had died? If so, how had it died? She knew so little of Karen, after all! . . .

The minutes passed, and still Mrs. Beverly continued to stand where she had received the message. She couldn't seem to assimilate it. Her body was tense, her hands were worrying the edge of the table; her forehead was wrinkled; it annoyed her to feel herself trembling.

She couldn't understand her reaction. She ought to have been thrilled with anticipation, self-forgetful, carried away. Instead, here she was shrinking into herself, with a painful, acknowledged dread. She dreaded meeting this friend whom she had loved and did love better than any other, better almost than her own people. Indeed, her love for the girl had been the beginning of her love for Karen's brother. She had loved John in desperation almost, clung to him, just at the first, as the only tangible link with his sister that remained. And yet he was totally different. One could scarcely believe in the authenticity of any blood tie between the two. John, quiet, meticulous, academic. Karen, an exotic meteor that had finally been flashed upon Broadway in the guise of a music show star of the first order.

Mrs. Beverly at last developed sufficient resistance to move as far as her desk, and from this vantage point to stare about her with an accretion of her misgiving. What would Karen say to this shabby room with the furniture battered up by her son's frequent attacks on it, the couch and chair coverings worn threadbare in places; no beauty, no distinction of any kind? She knew how the girl used to react to an ugly environment. Even the big desk—with its air of representing *something*,

at least, beyond the sordidly domestic—hardly redeemed the rest. She leaned her arms on it, and wished she had a cigarette within reach.

It was three years back that she had stopped smoking. The cigarette habit had commenced to levy too large a tax on her nervous strength; and starkly, one day, she had faced the fact that she must give up all these fictitious nerve releases, which were really nerve destroyers, if she wanted, in her scant hours of liberty, to be able to work at top pressure, and if she wanted, the rest of the time, to be a decent associate for her husband and child. She had that day faced the further fact that—for her, at least, situated as she was—artististic production meant the absolute sacrifice of practically all supernumerary activities outside of the essential offices demanded of her. All time-wasting interests, such as clothes, social engagements of any sort, even excessive time devoted to her baby, must be abandoned. She had accepted the situation, worked out a system for herself and hardly deviated from it since. . . .

So she had become a rigid ascetic, to such a degree that her environment had ceased to figure for her. The shabbiness and prosaicality which would once have galled her had become simply a part of that regular, not too disagreeable, routine, her only escape from which were the hours she spent at her desk. In those hours she saw nothing, bruised her eyes on nothing farther off than too often—the depressing blankness of the page in front of her. Nothing existed for her in the whole universe but the words which would ultimately pass out of her into type. . . .

But Karen could know nothing of all that. She would see only a dismal, essentially domestic interior, and a shoddy woman in the place of her former friend.

II

In those days—those delightful, irresponsible days of her intimacy with Karen, *she* had passed for brilliant too, if not even for exotic. Indeed, back

there, it had been *her* personality, moody, dynamic, alert, that had keyed up the other and dominated her. It had been she who had first started the girl New Yorkward.

She could remember that evening when they had thrashed it out. Had Karen talent enough to justify her in defying her family, breaking free of their close orthodox circle, taking her small inheritance and going to New York alone? "You must go, Karen." She remembered her exact tone as she had said those words, the tense hand which she had laid on the other's trembling shoulder, her almost hypnotic effort to coerce that impressionable, nervous and erratic consciousness toward what she had strongly felt would be its only authentic release.

She had felt then that Karen's weird beauty wasn't simply a feminine loveliness. It seemed to keep drawing so on something inside; it was so untr tranquil, so little a matter of surface; so *organic*. She had realized from the first that the immature but vibrant voice, the restless sensibility, the emotional, high-strung, nervous temperament were all parts of a whole. Desperate parts on the surface, which at the bottom composed. The creative temperament in embryo!

So she had sent Karen to New York. A year later, against the latter's consent, she had married Karen's brother.

"You'll never be happy with him, Jean. He's too normal for you. What do you want with marrying anyway, you, an artist! John will never fit into a writer's life. He's wonderful, but he wants a house and kids and all that kind of thing. Come to New York, dear. Don't marry. I *know* you'll be miserable. I'd rather have John wretched. I would, really."

Well, what was Karen's reaction going to be now? What had *she* to show for her five years, as equivalent for the other's brilliant if not too fastidious success? She gripped her hands along the sides of her desk until her knuckles were white, and envisaged her artistic output. Two thin boxes of typescript, the frail, sifted contents of which were all that her

five years had delivered. During that period, here and there, in magazines more or less impecunious, her verses had appeared. Recently an obscure publisher in Boston had printed her still more carefully winnowed first collection of poems. No gain accrued to her, save that of being at last permitted to assert herself in print. That was all.

That, and little Sholes. What was Karen going to think of him. He was murmuring to himself in his bed now; Jean went in to him, and, kneeling beside the crib, buried her head against his chuckling, motile little body and sobbed.

III

"WHY, Jean darling, you don't rouge any more? Have you gotten so virtuous?"

It was the light, false tone which Jean's nerves recognized as being called in to cover the tension of a difficult meeting, to hide their mutual shrinking sensitiveness. However, the words hurt her. If Karen only knew how little money there was; none for clothes, let alone for expensive rouges and powders and scents. But that didn't mean that she herself was philistine. Couldn't the other apprehend that where a choice had to be made, one—in regard to all non-essentials—simply acquiesced? One saved one's nerves for the big fight. . . .

She stole a hasty, despondent glance at herself in the gilt mirror which had been Karen's wedding gift. She had never cast up before the exact extent of her deterioration. She *had* horribly changed. Her figure had slacked down into absolute scrawniness. Her face, unpointed by makeup of any kind, appeared utterly plain. If there was still a certain gleam to it, of intelligence, of sensibility, why that was only for the critical eye. The cheeks were lined and hollowed, and, what was worse, greyly pallid. The dark eyes, however, were still splendid, oppressively so in their utter, unrelieved prominence. But her once gorgeous hair was thin and lifeless; her lips were almost as pale as her cheeks. She had had no time to keep

herself up, no energy. Couldn't Karen guess how those few but violent desk hours took it all? . . .

She clung to the girl a little emotionally, breathing in the sweet, familiar scent, resting her eyes on the other's beauty.

"You haven't changed, darling. Let me look at you; let me touch you."

She raised her hand to the little soft face in an old caress, and the other, feeling the hard flesh of it in place of its former suavity, drew it down and held it discontentedly in her immaculate, gloved palm.

"Jean, your beautiful hands! *What* have you done to them? Oh how could you? What's the matter with you? I think I shall *hate* John."

After that the tension had steadily grown. They had both lunged dizzily for one wrong after the other. They were talking to each other finally with all the caution, the circumlocution of rather hostile strangers. Their voices rang false. The nerves of each were continually stiffening and tightening against the other's next attack.

Karen was wandering restlessly about the room, seemingly unable to sit down. When the other urged her to take off her wraps, she slipped out of her long red cape but clung to hat and veil and gloves as to a veritable shelter, a certificate of escape. It was on the same principle by which one buys a return ticket. This distrustful attitude hurt Jean, and put her, in her turn, on the defensive. They were both grappling painfully for the old common ground, and perpetually bringing up, instead, on harsh foreign surfaces of reserve and mere manner.

"But where is Sholes?" the prospective aunt finally asked. "I've brought him such a beautiful toy, all the way from New York. Isn't he shown? Is that contrary to schedule?"

"Oh, Sholes isn't scheduled any more. He's almost three, you know. However, I think he's asleep; I just put him to bed before you came. But I'll bring him out for a minute."

She came back with him a little proud-

ly and tremulously, for the child was very beautiful. . . . But to Karen he was simply a child, an unfamiliar genus. She raked him with her bright, curious glance, kissed him till he screamed, gave him the plaything, kissed him again and forgot him. Jean instantly bore him away.

When she returned she found that Karen had subsided, temporarily, on the couch. It was now her turn to be restless. She kept fumbling about, as if her own room were strange to her. Indeed she *was* seeing it with new eyes, Karen's eyes. Meanwhile she was racking her brain for some kind of entertainment to proffer her guest. She hadn't thought to provide so much as food or drink. In the old days they had both been impatient of all such things.

She stopped in front of her friend and really took her in for the first time. The girl was aggressively beautiful. She was dressed in some marvelous fabrication of dull brown, a scant, untrimmed but luxurious affair that fitted her figure like a glove. A little hat obliterated a portion of her too redundant hair; and a miraculous veil gave the final thrust to a beauty that seemed to lie low, in subtle lines and curves and receding black and white richnesses of color. She was very much made up, but very perfectly. . . . Jean felt the old sensuous longing to take the precocious, exotic creature into her arms. For all her hurt sensibilities, she couldn't but love her and strain toward her still.

"Karen, how beautiful you are!"

Karen smiled. "I say, old dear, haven't you a cigarette on the premises?"

Jean gave a guilty start of annoyance. How could she have been so stupid, so shortsighted as to forget?

"Will you forgive me? I can get them in a minute. But you see it's all just pipes with John. And I had to give them up myself. Made me too nervous. And I can't afford any unnecessary nervousness."

She had reached the telephone, when she called back from there, "What is it, the old kind, Pall Malls?"

"Yes; king's size, if you don't mind."

Meanwhile Karen had risen and was poking about at her desk.

"Do you still write, Jean?"

The latter tried not to wince.

"You haven't read my book then? I thought I sent you a copy when it came out."

"Oh, yes; I remember now. I got it all right. And I did dip into it. Beautiful stuff, dear; but what's the good? It won't pay you ever, will it?" Then, catching a glimpse of the other's dismantled face, "however, I can't really discuss it with you. I haven't read enough of it yet. I'm saving it for a quiet stretch. I never seem to have any time of my own, these days. I don't usually get up till noon, and then there are a thousand things to do. Footless things, but they have to be done."

She yawned.

"The trouble with me today," she went on, "is that I got up at six, to catch that frightful first train. I can't remember when I've gotten up at such an hour before . . . Six o'clock in the morning is an absolute anachronism unless you're asleep. I feel as though I hadn't been to bed since yesterday. You can't think how dependent I am on sleep. That's why I have on this hideous hat. I have a lovely one, a dream I just bought. But when I tried it on this morning, in that awful grey Chicago light, I jerked it off again. It looked so pitiful and out of place and absurd, just the way I did. It has spoiled my whole day, that dreadful glimpse I got of myself. I haven't looked in a mirror since. I even made up by *feel*. I must look dreadful; how can you call me beautiful?"

She sighted a photograph of herself on the mantelpiece, and instantly veered toward it in the haphazard manner that seemed to characterize most of her movements.

"Oh, Jean, I have a much better one, taken a month ago at Hill's. I'll send it to you, if you like. You must stand it up here, in place of that."

"I'm very fond of that one."

"Oh, but this other is marvelous. You wouldn't know it for me. They've fixed

me up so, given me so much *presence*." She laughed. "It's only the gown. I've gotten the knack of dressing at least. I will say, old dear, I can do that very decently."

"I should think you could," Jean agreed.

"You know, there's a Russian attached to our company, a painter *soi-disant*, who wants to do me. I'd like to let him, because they say he's rather good."

"Why don't you?"

"Oh, I don't know. *Les scenes intimes*! He thinks, you see, that he's in love with me."

She flicked the ashes from her cigarette and leaned back with a stretch of her long, flexible body.

"I get so tired of their lovemaking."

"Karen, always, do you?"

"Yes, always. Except last winter for about a month. The man, however, was married. Rum go. But it's a silly asinine business from any standpoint. So enervating."

She laughed the low, cynical, slightly grating laugh which Jean had heard several times since she had arrived.

"Tell me about your play," she urged quietly.

"Oh, it's asinine, too. A typical Broadway production. Though I oughtn't to say so, since I'm allowed, for my sublime assistance, six hundred bucks a week. Don't come and see it, Jean. My part is contemptible. Nothing but clothes and smirking. I've only been at it three months and I'm dead sick of it already. Booked for over a year more, too. You see we have to give it to New York for a whole season. This trip's just the tryout . . . But at least one will be in New York. How I hate Chicago!"

Her eyes began roving again, and Jean was sure her body would soon follow. She dreaded, yet almost wished that the other would go. They were doing so badly.

"It's terribly uncomfortable, too, living this way. My New York apartment is a dream. I think it would satisfy even your fastidious taste. But this liv-

ing in hotels is unbearable. Particularly these awful Chicago hotels. Nothing but dingy rooms and the most abominable service. I can't even get the right lipstick in this demented town. And it rains all the time. Oh, I can't *wait* to get through with this horrible tour, and back to New York. Jean, why don't you come to New York? How can you stick in a place like this year after year?"

The other seemed to have lost even her zest to resent things.

"Oh, it does well enough, for my work," she said.

"Your house is nice," Karen murmured. "Awfully lived in, isn't it? Those brass candlesticks are lovely. You ought to stand some sort of high red jar in between them. I saw just the one, yesterday, in a little curio shop. I'll send it to you."

"Oh, my dear, don't. It would be out of place. You see how shabby things are. They're better left."

"Are you so poor, Jean? I thought John was head of his department now. Didn't you write me? Salary bigger. His research work being printed in the *Journal of Morphology*, or something?"

Jean, for the first time, met her friend's eyes with a straight, level stare.

"Yes, John is doing brilliantly. In his line, he'll go very far, I imagine. He'll end with as big a reputation as Loeb's, perhaps. But what you forget, Karen, is that in our profession we never make any money. When you said you were getting six hundred a week, I wanted to laugh. We don't get, for the three of us, much more than that in two months. And yet one doesn't mind; one hardly thinks of it."

She had almost added, "Money comes to seem a little vulgar just as such." But this reflection she had checked, partly out of delicacy, partly from a doubt of its sincerity.

"Don't you make something with your writing?" Karen had become very sober.

"No; one doesn't make money writing poetry. One mostly even has to print one's own stuff. You see, there aren't any George Cohans among the

editors, ready to take a chance on me. I have to just bore my way."

"It's because what you write is something more than a pretty figure or a wistful smile. Oh, I know. Tell me, Jean, what you do all day? Hour after hour? Tell me."

The latter smiled at last; and the smile was as bitter as if she had followed her impulse, and let the hot, smarting tears stream down over her cheeks. "Very well, if it will amuse you. I get up anywhere from half-past six on."

Karen shuddered. "How atrocious. But why?"

"Necessity, my child. Sholes rises then; hence I."

"But the nurse?"

"My dear Karen, I have no nurse. It's only recently that I've been able to afford a maid . . . That may account to you for the condition of my hands."

"You mean you have actually cooked and scrubbed and all that? That's all right for some women, but *you*, Jean! It's like using mahogany for firewood."

"Well, I imagine it would burn all right. Anyway I cook pretty fairly. I've learned, since we knew each other. I can also iron and wash the baby's things."

"You have?"

"Yes, I have. I don't any more. Sholes is through with them. But to go on with my day . . . I rise at six-thirty and attend to my son. Then I endeavor to get John off. He's like you about getting up. After that, there's the housework until eleven, when Sholes gets bathed and fed again. Twelve to three is usually free time because he is sleeping then. In the afternoon he has to be walked out. There is sometimes an hour or so before dinner. Rarely, though. Some of the evenings are free for me. But I always have, absolutely assured, from eleven or thereabouts until one. I've been going on five hours' sleep a night for five years."

IV

KAREN yawned. "It's preposterous. You! If I believed that there ever was a human being one couldn't domesticate,

you were that person. And now to come back and find you with your hands all frayed and your body tired and your nerve gone! Your day just a mess of little sordid details that a charwoman could attend to. And you *satisfied* to be like that!"

"You're overlooking a few of the details, aren't you, which a charwoman perhaps couldn't attend to?"

Jean's voice had been ominously gentle, but her friend hadn't bothered with its tone quality. However, her own mood suddenly changed, and she slurred from her previous didactic note.

"Perhaps, though, I envy you a little, minus the poverty. It must be nice to have a house, like other women, and a man and a child. Anyway, they say it is. *Is it nice, Jean?* But then," with another swift change, "of course you'd say so. Even if you didn't mean it. You've conformed."

Jean didn't deny this. "You haven't told me much about yourself. What do *you* do with your days? You act only at night, I suppose, and one or two matinees."

"Oh, I don't do anything worth the telling. You see, I don't take myself very seriously, I'm afraid. Hardly my work, any more. What's the use? . . . Well, I get up, my dear Jean, about noon. Then there is always, call it review of stock. Namely, my beautiful and highly important corporeal self to be attended to. Massage, manicure, hairdresser, dressmaker, all that business. It's very essential, in my case. It's my stock in trade, to a great extent. After that, whatever time is left I devote to amusement. The days go. I never have time for even the few things I still want to do . . . I scarcely read a newspaper any more. Intellectually, I'm absolutely outside the pale. She smiled again in that new, cruel fashion. Then she began fidgeting. "I'm afraid I'll have to go soon. I must get back early this afternoon."

"You won't stay for lunch? John was counting on it."

"Oh, no; I can't. I'll probably be down again."

"Come down next Sunday. You don't play, do you, on Sunday? I'll have some people in. It won't be so tedious."

Karen overlooked the last implication. "Yes, we play on Sunday. Besides I hate meeting people. Especially *your* people. I wouldn't know what to talk to them about. I haven't any house or babies. Nothing but lovers, and they wouldn't like that."

For still another moment Jean's face remained taut. Then it broke for the rush of anger and hurt pride which she had been keeping back all the forenoon.

"Oh, they wouldn't mind hearing about your lovers, although they might regard such things as rather banal. . . . Most of the people that I know *do* things, write or paint or play. They'd very likely consider you as much of a philistine as you could possibly consider them. I'm even afraid that most of them would never have bothered to see a Broadway production, though they'd all try to pretend they had, for courtesy's sake."

Karen smiled.

"Yes, I see. I'd be only a Broadway actress, wouldn't I, to them? No great shakes, is it Jean, to be a Broadway actress? But then I've told you, I don't take my profession very seriously."

"Karen, why don't you?" After her outbreak Jean had stopped, frightened and ashamed. Also she had been checked by the tears that finally did well out over her cheeks, those tears of nervousness and excitement which she had been keeping back for some time. But at the girl's last words she forgot herself. Under the mockery of them, she had heard the note of pain. Karen was unhappy.

"Why don't you?" she insisted. "It's all there, pent up in you. Why are you willing to hold it in, for six hundred a week?"

"I'm *not* willing." The other's voice was grave now, and infinitely sad. "I do it; as you say. But I'm not willing. That's what you must understand."

With one of her old impulsive movements she was beside her friend with her arms about her. Jean could only

cling. The wistfulness and passion of that face so near her own was so indescribably poignant.

"Jean, darling," the girl was saying, "we came perilously near quarrelling, didn't we, for the first time in our lives? Why was it? It was because we were both so on edge, wasn't that why? We both dreaded so this meeting."

Jean was still limply crying.

"It's nerves," she whispered. "You seemed so strange and gorgeous and out of reach. And so revolted by my mediocrity. I felt that I was almost repugnant to you, the way a cook would be or a nursemaid."

"*Jean!* . . . And I was afraid too, don't you see? I was afraid of showing to you for what I am now, purely commercial. I don't so much mind, myself, but I couldn't bear to feel you judging me."

"We've both changed; that's inevitable." It was Jean's habitual, straight tone back again, in spite of the quaver. "You've become more beautiful if anything; and successful. You've made good. I've deteriorated; I've lost my hold on things, let go. I know it, dear. What I dreaded finding out was *how much* I'd let go of. And that, your loveliness, your words, your very silences have told me. I've *seen* myself this morning. I'm utterly commonplace; as you said, frayed. And rather ridiculous, I think. I've been taking myself so seriously. It's only a failure who needs to take himself seriously. I'm pretty much of a failure, I suppose. I believe I've suspected it a long time, but I've put off admitting it. And it was the fear of admitting it that made me so sensitive and on the defensive with you. Will you forgive me? Our divergence needn't alienate us, not if you don't mind."

"Jean, what are you saying?" The expressive listening face flooded with earnestness; the voice flowed with a hundred overtones; all the flatness, the rasping cynicism was gone. It sounded at that moment, to the other woman, as the most beautiful voice she had ever heard. "For all your letting go, as you call it, there's one thing you've never

let go of—your work. You've kept faith—with yourself : . . Don't you know what that means? You don't; but you would if you hadn't. I know. Oh, Jean, it's I who am the failure. Not you. All this means nothing."

She took in her appointments with a sweeping, scornful gesture. "Haven't I wished a thousand times that I were back where we both stood five years ago. But my line is different. I had to take what I could get. One *can* write in solitude, but one can't act. One must have an audience, a theatre. If you knew the months I spent just beating it around from one manager to another. And I did turn things down, too, Jean. Vaudeville engagements. Tempting moving picture offers. But after a while, you think, what's the use? What's the use of having even a little talent if you have to keep it pent up inside you all the time? What becomes essential to an actress after a while is a chance to act. Any chance. And when you get to that point, you use any means, too. You're grateful for your good figure or your pretty face or whatever it is that finally puts you across. And you make the most of them. You *trade* on them. You can't help doing it . . . Oh, Jean, I wish you'd understand. I *want* you to understand. I want to explain it all to some one. And to myself. I've pressed it all back for so long."

"Go on, dear; tell me . . . As if I didn't understand."

"By that time the virus is in you and it starts working. You have to dress to get a new part. Not only dress, but keep up, you know. And to do that, you have to make money. So that you have to take a part that will pay. And then after a while you can't do without the money and all the accessories you've become dependent on. And so you fall into the regular life. You learn to jolly the managers and flirt with the stage directors and sneak yourself in on top of someone else. It's all sickening, but you get used to it; and that's what's most sickening of all. It's a vicious circle. I've wished again and again that I could start over, start differently. But of late,

it's only in the night sometimes, when I can't sleep, or out in the park on some specially nice day; or in a bookshop perhaps, that I feel that awful gnawing of regret. And it stops very quickly. I have to hurry back for some appointment or other. I forget it. And then, presently, I'm back in the game again, with no way out. Don't you see? Oh, Jean, in a sense I'm done for."

"Dear Karen!"

"Only yesterday I was thinking about you. I went into McClurg's. The very thought that I was coming down here made me want to be a little less illiterate, not quite so vulgar. And then while I was wandering among all those books, like a lost soul, not even knowing what counter I wanted to go to, I realized how frightful it is to spend money week after week, such heaps of it, just for food and clothes, and not a cent on anything of real value . . . lend me some books, Jean, will you?"

"I'll lend you anything I possess, my darling, that you want. But Karen, now that you've made your tally, put it over or whatever it is called, made a name for yourself, now dear, why not begin? . . . Begin, I mean, to do *your* special work on the stage. Even if it isn't remunerative, just at first. Please, Karen."

It was the old, urgent voice, the old probing gaze of those intense, ascetic eyes, the old hypnosis, Karen felt it and submitted to it, as she had always done.

"Help me to, Jean. When I am with you I almost feel that I could. You see what it would mean is that I should have to go into stock, or God knows what dreary work for a while. And I haven't saved a cent. I shouldn't have anything to live on but the measly little salary they would pay me. . . . I've thought of it . . . at night . . . but in the morning I know I never shall. I can't live now without all these traps. I can't seem to breathe any more outside of New York. And to go off to some dingy hole and drudge. Just for a problematical success. I *never will* do it. Not unless you were to come with me, and

stand over me all the time. Then I believe I could. Will you come with me, Jean?"

V

THERE was a long pause. It seemed almost as though the other wanted to consent. She stretched out a thin hand from which the marks of physical labor hadn't been able to obliterate that sensitive, tenacious look of the ascetic, the artist.

"How can I? There's my work, and John."

Karen felt for her gloves and began drawing them on. "No, we shall just go our ways, I suppose."

"We shall have to go our ways."

The girl walked over to the mirror, and, raising her veil, touched up her cheeks and lips.

"Give me your book, dear," she called over her shoulder. "I lied to you; I haven't got it. I lost it somewhere. But I want to read tonight."

She came back, artificial and striking as ever, yet with, under it all, a sadness

that was for the other woman a sharp pang.

"You'll promise to come back?"

Karen held her again, very close, totally indifferent as what damage such caresses should inflict on her just perfected ensemble.

"Probably I shan't. But I shall think of you. . . . It's been all right, hasn't it, after all?"

"I shall think of you," was all Jean could find to answer. "I shall come and see your play."

"Come if you like; I don't mind now. But you'll hate it; so why bother?"

She wrapped herself in her long red cape, with no further glances toward the mirror.

"Kiss Sholes for me. Tell him his aunt Karen will send him a great rocking horse tomorrow." . . . At the door she turned again for one of her clairvoyant tender flashes. "Don't sit down and brood, Jean. Remember the precious moments. Make a poem of this. After all, it will have served some purpose then. And don't worry. We shall just go our ways. Good-by, old dear."



The Teacher

By Evelyn Wells

HIS books had taught him the breadths of space
The distance from sun to sun,
Of night-pools gutted with slag of worlds,
Of races the wild stars run.

Yet he had not known the meaning of space,
Changeless, endless, and dim,
With its shroud of terror and lonely deeps,
Till he found She had gone from him.



Wants Of Women

By E. E. Boylan

IN Taimati the women wear but a skirt woven of the white flower of Hate, blossoming forever near the spring Vannak.

And on those other islands just where the day begins even the queen Jan-neth's pale daughters are content with skins of the desert lion brooding beyond the gates.

Yea—the dawn-haired peasant girls of Torreg seek lovers tinted in nine colours, but ask for clothing only the soft bark of those lone-standing trees in the three broad forests of Quipo.

I am enhungered for a woman more fair. But she will have none of these. Rather she asks fabric of gray spider silk from the loom of the blind weaver of Chi-san, who toils, even as his fathers' fathers, only during the eclipse, though the rice jar be empty for months.

Also she would have a cloak of flame-tipped feathers, each from the breast

of a bird that sang in the time-forgotten gardens of Halcynthus, before Death came.

And for her small feet, thus is she fain. From the metal of star-dust, not to be bought except with Honour; and from that jewel known to poets, found in Tarn Torové at the foot of Hurtle Hills, him of Viralta that made the petals of the flower of Night shall fashion sandals and shoon.

Much more would she. I am but a poverty-stricken young man and must travail in Chi-san and among those tribes of Korros who hold the plumage of Halcynthus at high ransom. And I must seek stardust at all costs and the dark Tarn Torové and the artisan of Viralta.

But if there be fair women and pleasant smiles in those lands through which I shall journey, mayhap I shall forget her of many desires, and while fulfilling their wishes suffer other lovers—if such there be—to venture and return from the edge of Time.



IT is significant that at the hub of the universe—Forty-second Street and Broadway—there is a drugstore.



The Droll Secret of Mademoiselle

By Maurice Davis

I

MONSIEUR, his violin case tucked under one tight-sleeved arm, stood gazing up at the house from what was a novel angle of inspection for him—the outside. He was so well acquainted with the interior that it struck him now he had given very little attention to the house *ab extra*, and he continued to gaze at it.

Standing there in silent, rigid contemplation he was reminiscent of a ghost figure long since gone from the proscenium, not only of the stage, but of the world: the antiquated tragedian of the plug hat era. In other moments Monsieur was not strikingly like anything in particular, save that he was as unlike a Frenchman as he was like the music show comedian's impersonation of one.

The street in which he stood in so rapt contemplation was like a well-cut sleeve of fashion and quality which had broken through its selvage and frayed a little. Toward Fifth Avenue it had been obliged to retain and maintain its cut and quality, but a thread in the middle of the block had worn somewhat and had given the sleeve a shabby appearance as it stretched out toward Sixth Avenue. Before arriving here it picked up more threads which became interwoven in a varicoloured and desultory pattern and passed residences that were not of either pattern, appearing to be in a perennial state of vacillation over the right way to turn for salvation.

The house that Monsieur stared at was one of these.

It was an old-fashioned, gabled dwelling hinting at much roominess within. It stood alone, and in the open spaces

to either side one could see high dormer windows. In the front there was a slight but incontestable deformity. It was a missing porch rail in the wide, circular railing that encompassed the porch. With this tooth gone the railing had a snagly grin for the sedate row of private houses to the left—toward Fifth Avenue—and a slightly superior grin for the row of private houses to the right with no pretensions whatever.

Beyond the railing a light shone through the curtains of the three tall windows leading off the porch. In the middle window was a neat white glass sign, telling in neat black script of the business carried on within the house. The script read:

Mademoiselle Flaubesseau
Coiffeuse Tonsorial
Cheveux

In the window to the right, in the space between the pane and the curtain, was a pedestal on which rested a wax bust of a girl with bobbed hair; in the other hung switches, braids, spread hair, rolled hair, blond hair coiffured and brunette hair hanging in an abortive state verging on a golden hue.

Monsieur, probably because he had never before contemplated all this from the outside, was conscious of a curious sensation as he continued to regard the neat little sign. The mild little fiction of the "Mademoiselle," for instance, had never before struck him so forcibly in quite its present light of understatement of the case.

For a few moments he stared at the sign, then resolutely walked up to the steps, mounted them gracefully and stood before the heavy walnut doors. In spite of himself—and fortified by the

knowledge that no customers were in the shop—he punched the bell a little timidly. The result was as he expected.

Mademoiselle herself, a large, active woman with a rosy-pink countenance suggestive of excellent living, and hair that was ultra-flaxen by virtue of Mademoiselle's chemistry, opened the door.

"*Ola! it ess you.*"

"*Oui—it ees me.*"

"*Ha! Qu'est-ce?*"

"Cosette, I would talk."

"*Oui—I know it, M'sieur. It ees all you do—talk. If you would work like an Amerikeen husband we would be of no difference. But you weel not. Thees morning I told you all. It is enough. You will not work, M'sieur? You will hug and tickle the girls who come here, M'sieur? Ola!—we shall see, M'sieur!*"

"It ees not so, my darling."

"Ah! I see. Thees girl's neck—she was cold, eh? You had the arm around to make the neck comfortable, eh, M'sieur?"

Monsieur hesitated but an instant. In his composition there was a deal of the courtly. Not only were his manners elegant, but he had a certain personal charm, and along with these, as the Dutchman, his friend who kept the eating-house round in Sixth Avenue, often told him, he "could say something."

"Cosette, my love, you dear, you have no idea of the artist. You know not of the suffering—"

"*Diable! I know nothing of the suffering! Ha!*"

She moved to close the door.

"My precious Cosette! Hear, my love, what I am to say."

"*Se sauver. I hear enough.*"

"You love me not, my darling Cosette?" he asked a little anxiously.

"If M'sieur weel have the truth I weel tell heem that I have lost the desire for heem. *Voilà ce que c'est.*"

"But maybe Madame would—eh!—eh—if M'sieur would not tell her secret. *Bien, eh?*"

"I am not afraid, M'sieur."

And before Monsieur could utter an-

other syllable the heavy walnut doors came to in a jointure that three men and a boy might have been proud to pry asunder.

Back on the sidewalk Monsieur took another glance at the house and then consulted his timepiece, an old dollar watch. It wanted a few minutes of eleven o'clock. As he was without funds, clearly he saw he was doomed to wander the streets all night long. Already the neighbourhood was showing signs of desertion. A man walking down the pavement on the opposite side of the street produced something of a racket with his heels, and the echo sent a sudden chill of loneliness to Monsieur's heart. The sounds of the other's heels seemed to tramp the truth more firmly on Monsieur's consciousness: *he had been put out.* That M'sieur of the non-rubber heels was in all likelihood going home to a warm bed. Lucky gentleman!

He confessed concern to himself. Of course he had had differences with Cosette—oh, many, many times—and had been threatened with homelessness as many times, but this was the most decisive step she had ever taken. All evening he had searched for some sort of reasonable compromise, and had given up. He had come merely in curiosity to see if his last recourse would effect anything. He was satisfied now. *Vraiment!* hadn't she confessed to having lost the appetite for him? When a woman loses the appetite for one, clearly it is not the time to go on.

He gave one last look at the house. A gloomy mass of mystery it was to the passerby—but *he* knew its secret. Suppose others were to learn—his heart gave a sudden leap as he realized that he alone was in possession of the key to the denouement of the whole thing—he alone knew what went on behind those formidable walnut doors. Surely she would come to terms before the night was through.

II

SLIPPING the violin case a little more

snugly under his arm, Monsieur made his way along the quiet street to Sixth Avenue. Here it was not so remindful of his predicament, as the night life was merely beginning. He rounded the corner and went down a few doors, thoughtfully entering the Dutchman's.

Most of the Dutchman's business prowled in after midnight, and so the place was very nearly deserted. At one side, near the corner, Monsieur observed two old men playing checkers on a board painted on the oilcloth covering of the table; farther along he saw the Dutchman himself, who was alone with an assistant. Monsieur sat down, placing his hat on a rack over the mirror at his side and the violin case on the adjacent chair.

"*Café*," he told the assistant, bowing recognition.

In a moment the Dutchman strolled up and dropped into the seat opposite.

"How is everythin', Henri?"

Monsieur shook his head.

"Not so good, *M'sieur*."

"How is the Missus?"

"Terrible."

"Eh? Sick?"

"Of me, *M'sieur*—yees. Verree sick."

The waiter brought the cup of coffee and departed. Monsieur stared meaninglessly at the steaming beverage, idly stirring it with a lead spoon.

"Henri, you look outta sorts," the Dutchman, a big, jovial, moon-faced fellow, told him, narrowly scanning Monsieur's countenance.

"No, no. It ees so droll. I was thinking how droll it ees."

"Droll, eh?" the Dutchman sympathized, having not the vaguest idea of the malady which so affected his friend. "It is, eh?"

For some time Monsieur stared ahead. At last, however, he turned with something of a smile. When Monsieur smiled it was worth while. His brows went up and he looked from the tail of his eye.

"The secret of *la maison*, *M'sieur*. Aha! she has not the knowledge that I know. All the time that I play in my room—all the time I spend with the

masters, with thees Paganini, thees De Beriot, thees Brahms, thees Fiorilla—she theenks I am so busy I am blind. No, no, *M'sieur*, I have knowledge of what has been going on in that house. A terrible house, *M'sieur*—but so droll."

The Dutchman favored this bit of intelligence with a glance that invited more.

"Yer don't say?" he commented.

"*Diable!* *Le* secret police ought to know! *Ola!*"

"There's no murder in it, yer don't suppose?"

"*Non*—no, no—it ees worse."

The Dutchman squirmed a little in his seat and hitched his chair up closer to the table edge.

"Now, what do yer suppose—"

"*M'sieur*—have you heard—what you call heem?—the blind animal?"

The Dutchman looked completely baffled at this.

"The blind animal?" he echoed.

"Or what—I cannot theenk of heem—what you call heem? The sightless tiger? That ees it! The sightless tiger, *M'sieur!*"

"Yer mean a blind tiger?"

"*Voilà* Thees ees indeed heem!"

"What about it?"

"She has heem."

The Dutchman whistled softly.

"Yer don't say! I can hardly believe it. It's a wonder the cellar smellers didn't get her before this. Say, I wonder if you could bargain for a bottle of—"

"No, no, *M'sieur* Dutch. I have been—what you call?—shown of the gate. It ees so curious, *M'sieur*—so droll!"

"And so that hair-scalping joint is just a curtain for the tiger, eh?"

"It ees nonsense. One, two customers—maybe three. But in the cellar, *M'sieur*—aha! the customers are much Chartreuse, a leetle—champagne—port but whiskey! *M'sieur*, I have been down to the cellar, but thees was not *nece-saire*. *La maison*—it has no secret inside. It ees of a tremendous smell."

The Dutchman nodded, still a trifle dazed with the import of the disclosure.

"And now, what d'yer suppose—"

"Ah, at midnight, *M'sieur*, I give her one chance more to tell me she cares for me not quite so less. She may not let me in—" Here Monsieur raised his brows and looked through the tail of his eye—"and that would be droll."

He concluded with a sagacious nod and an expression whose ominous subtlety prophesied no little ill fortune to Mademoiselle Flaubesseau.

"Well, well," the Dutchman finally ventured. "The Missus is a live one, all right. The profits must be e-normous. I was only talking to her this morning and never suspected a thing. She's a great one."

"Eees it not 'droll'?"

"Well," the other replied, scratching his sandy head, "leastways, it isn't dry."

Monsieur nodded less energetically than was his wont and glanced up at the clock which hung on the rear wall. The hands were close to midnight. He rose, reached for his black alpine and picked up the violin case.

"I go now, *M'sieur*. I may be back—who know?—and she may let me in. Perhaps I see you again, *M'sieur*."

III

THE street was even more quiet when Monsieur, violin case under arm, again turned into it than it had been when he left it. Leisurely he strolled down the block until the brown wooden house was reached. The porch rail still had its snagly grin, but *Ola!* it now had something to grin about! The secret hidden in the quiet and gloom of that house!

Earlier in the evening Monsieur had only remotely thought of converting the secret he possessed into a sword of Damocles which he might keep in a perennial state of suspension over Cosette's flaxen head, but now he saw that, aside from being droll, it was more than a mere sword of Damocles: it was a fulcrum on which his happiness of the future would turn. Cosette, once having heard him through, would be agreeable.

He mounted the steps decorously, revealing nothing of exultance in his man-

ner, although he may have hugged the violin case more tightly to his lean ribs. Clearly Cosette's power to keep him out of doors was waning—was indeed a prerogative of the past. With this interesting reflection he rang the bell and held his breath as it echoed hollowly within the depths of the still house.

He waited. There was no response. He rang again and again without hearing an answering sound within, save the echo. Finally, however, a window round to the side was thrown up violently, and in quest of this he descended the porch steps with a deal of haste, moving round to the open space flanked by the beginning of a row of private houses.

"*Mon Dieu!*—it ees you!"

Monsieur heard the words before he saw the pink boudoir cap that was thrust out of a window on the first floor, several feet beyond his reach. There he stood, instrument under his arm, like an ill-tempered troubadour come to serenade a disagreeable lady.

"*Oui*—it ees me," he confessed in subdued tones, fearful of arousing the neighbors.

"*Mon Dieu!*—you might let people sleep."

"*Oui, oui*—if but my darling Cosette would see that I might sleep."

"What ees it you want, idiot?"

"The key, my precious—"

"*Partir, s'en aller*—"

"Come, come, Madame, it ees not time for nonsense. I may help Madame—eh!—with thees key by telling what I know of her so droll secret?"

"How you say?"

"Ha, ha, Madame, the secret of *la maison*. Thees droll smell."

"*Allons donc!* I am not afraid, *M'sieur*. Thees house is honest."

"*La, la*, Madame, you jest."

"Away, *M'sieur*, or I will have the police on you."

"Do so, Madame, do so. The animal may be blind, but *M'sieur* is not so. *Ha!* You understand? You will now have thees key?"

"*Non—*"

"Thees last time I ask, Madame."
Monsieur spoke up ominously.

"Non—"

"Theenk well."

"Non—"

"Verree well. Madame shall see."

The window was slammed down with what struck Monsieur as unwarranted violence and noise. For some moments he stood silent, shaking a tightly-clenched fist at the point where he had last seen the pink boudoir cap. At last, however, realizing that this was futile, he turned abruptly, retraced his steps to the gate and reached the sidewalk.

Back on Sixth Avenue he made his way southward for a few blocks, then turned into a side street going west. Finally he came to a graystone building that looked like a small cathedral, save for the two green lights that burned so luridly at either side of the entrance steps.

Mounting these steps with all the intrepidity at his command he pulled open a massive door and entered, finding a lieutenant at an elevated desk behind a wooden railing. The man had been humming unconcernedly, but broke off long enough to ask Monsieur what it was he wished.

"Verree quiet, M'sieur."

"Eh? Confidential—that it?"

"*Oui*—a blind—what you call—thees tiger."

"Oh!" the lieutenant interjected; and, following a short interval, "*Oh*—so you're a cellar-smeller?" He rose, the better to peer over the desk for a more liberal view of Monsieur.

"How you say, M'sieur?"

"I say, you're reporting a blind still, eh? Good for you."

The lieutenant picked up a pen,

"Where's this joint, Misheer?"

Briefly Monsieur described the location.

"A-a-l right, Misheer. We'll look into it. Thanks. Good night."

IV

It was a fine evening and the Dutchman had stepped outside his restaurant

for a breath of fresh air and a look at the stars through the intersections of the elevated road hard overhead. He had not taken many breaths when Patrolman Cassidy came along.

"Hi, there, Dutch," came the patrolman's festive greeting, delivered in a solemnly grave voice.

"How are yer, Cass? What's new?"

Patrolman Cassidy checked the gyrations of his nightstick.

"Nothing much. Did yer hear about the Frog around the corner?"

"What's that?"

"His case came up in court this morning. The lieutenant was down and was telling me about it. Funny about that Frog—wasn't it?"

"How'd it come out?"

"He got three months on the Island."

"Yer don't say?"

"He'd 'av got more, only the judge knowed that he'd confessed and took that into consideration. The lieutenant sez that the judge told the Frog it was his own conscience that saved him from getting three years a-stead of three months. 'If yer own conscience,' the judge sez, 'hadn't troubled yer into telling us when we didn't know anything about yer, yer'd 'av gone up for years. For listening to yer own conscience I'm gonna go light on yer,' the judge told him."

"Yer don't say?" reiterated the Dutchman somewhat abstractedly. "And what about Henri's Missus?"

"Well, yer see, as the judge explained, a man is responsible fer his wife's debts and her mistakes in business—leastways, where they is no criminal intent. Still, funny, ain't it, that that Frog confessed that way?"

The speaker was met with a curious silence.

"Nice night," Patrolman Cassidy suggested, glancing up at the stars.

The Dutchman did not reply at once. He appeared to have sunk into a curious abstraction. Even Patrolman Cassidy, although not generally observant, noted and wondered over the Dutchman's immersion in the realm of thought. At last, however, the latter

slowly lifted up his glance to the stars. He contemplated them long and earnestly, as if fascinated. He was. His wits were painfully slow movers, but it had suddenly dawned on him why stars wink.



The Great Don Juan

By John F. Lord

HE was a cosmopolitan. He had traveled the world over. He had met girls in many lands, had spoken to them, had flirted with them, had wooed them. Some had answered shyly, some openly. The answers ranged all the way from *non* to *nein*.



Wild Thought

By John Hall Wheelock

SURF of Song upon my heart
Breaks forever where thou art.

The dark ocean in my breast
Of wild love may never rest.

Still one thought upon her shore
Breaks in dream forevermore.



THE sad part of a woman-hater's life is that in one afternoon he meets more pretty girls than he can hate for the rest of his mortal existence.



"I LOVE" and "I marry" are both sentences. The difference is that "I marry" is a life sentence.



MEN only become famous by concealing their indiscretions. Women, by parading them.

Répétition Générale

By H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan

§ 1

THE ETERNAL SUBJECT.—

THE tragedy of experience is that a man no longer believes it when a woman shows all the orthodox signs of having been flustered by him. In youth it gives him immense delight to discover that he has made a mash, but when he gets into the middle years the thing merely annoys him. He is irritated that yet another wench should try to floor him with the immemorial hocus-pocus, and so make a fool of him. The gal he falls for is the one who tells him frankly that her heart is buried in France, but that she admires him tremendously and would esteem it a singular honour to be the wife of so meritorious a fellow. This helps to explain why elderly goats so often succumb to cuties.

§ 2

The Disease.—What ails the United States, politically, is briefly this: that an effort is being made to preserve the forms of democracy after the extinction of the thing itself. The notion that this is actually a democratic nation is surely one of the most absurd ever hatched. It is actually so only by a sort of legal fiction. Laws are made in the name of the people as a whole, and executed to the tune of much pious platitude, but the simple truth is that nine-tenths of them are devised and put through by the small oligarchy of usurers and office-holders which really runs the country. Whenever genuine democracy makes an attempt to assert itself, as among the yokels of the Dakotas, all the forces of the government are exerted to put it

down. The Kate O'Hare case and the Townley case are quite typical. In both, the genuine rulers of the land employed all of the ancient devices of autocracy, including slander and perjury, to destroy two fanatics whose only intelligible crime was that they actually believed in democracy and sought to give it practical effect.

The whole democratic theory rests upon a thumping fallacy, to wit, the fallacy that the plain people are intelligent, and hence able to discover their own interests and to promote them wisely. The fact is that the plain people are always too stupid to do anything of the sort. Thus, with the power in their hands and nothing but nitrogen in their heads, they fall easy and willing prey to scoundrels professionally devoted to bamboozling them, *e.g.*, to politicians, to reformers, to uplifters, to newspaper writers, to idealists, to forward-lookers and right-thinkers. Their proneness to yield to such swine gradually discourages and silences all more honest and intelligent leaders. The result, in the end, is that the choice before them is worse than that of Hobson. On the one hand they may choose a knave and on the other hand they may choose a rogue. It is only by some miracle that a man of even ordinary decency gets before them, and nine times out of ten their old masters find it child's-play to inflame them against him, and so dispose of him before he can do any damage to the existing order.

A political combat in the United States is seldom between the oligarchy on the one hand and the people on the other—that is, openly and squarely. It is usually simply civil war between two wings of the oligarchy. Sometimes the

plutocrats are lined up on one side and the professional politicians on the other; sometimes some of the plutocrats and some of the professional politicians are allied on one side and the rest on the other. In any case the majority of Americans, theoretically not only parties to the conflict but also its judges, are actually no more than hired mercenaries—worse, mercenaries who are swindled out of their hire. The strategy of the campaign is made up wholly of efforts to deceive them, and so enlist them. They play exactly the same part at the polls that they play in war. That is, they waste themselves heroically upon a contest that does not concern them, and all the while the actual contestants remain in a place of safety and prepare to enjoy the spoils.

How any sane man, in the face of these obvious facts, can continue to believe in democracy is more than I can fathom. That a man should approve the current buffoonery is, of course, easily imaginable; I am in favour of it myself. But I am in favour of it because I enjoy seeing democracy reduced to an absurdity, because I delight in the bamboozling and swindling of the boobs. How can any man favour it who really sympathizes with the boobs? In other words, how can any man be a democrat who is sincerely a democrat?

§ 3

On the Fox-Trot.—To argue against dancing that it is an idiotic enterprise for an intelligent male is to argue against an insane asylum that it is full of insane persons. The charm of dancing lies in this very idiocy. It is that which makes it appeal to the more tutored fellow. It affords him his only socially approved opportunity to act like a hanswurst, and there was never an intelligent man who didn't at times feel the need for such a lapse from dignity. George Washington, once three drinks were warbling within him, always promptly got out on the floor, grabbed the nearest lollipop and proceeded to turn a fancy toe. Lord Nelson was in

the habit of dancing his pumps to a frazzle whenever the opportunity was vouchsafed him. Ibsen, once he had enough lager in him, was loud in his demands for another polka. And the greatest statesman in the England of today is, under the incog. of Farnham, one of the chief Saturday night patrons of the half-hidden supper clubs.

§ 4

Shakespearean Note.—The late William Shakespeare, like nearly all other first-rate artists, was out of tune with his race and time; his Hamlet profoundly reflects his own inner turmoils, as Frank Harris has well argued. It was a day of rising democracy—and Shakespeare threw all the weight of his genius upon the side of the old order, just as Goethe did after him. No doubt the fact explains the slow growth of his fame. While he lived his greatness was apparent only to a few connoisseurs, notably Ben Jonson. For two generations after his death he was in almost utter obscurity; meanwhile, England was racked by the Commonwealth of green-grocers and peasants. When there came, at last, the inevitable reaction against democracy, the Bard was taken into Valhalla. Since then he has always been popular in inverse proportion to the popularity of democratic buncombe. Thus he has so often lost money for managers in the United States. But he made money for them in the Germany of the imperial years between 1870 and 1918—in fact, he was even more popular there than Goethe.

Harris is a bit horrified by Shakespeare's contempt for the rabble, though surely not blind to his genius. Harris himself is a fanatical lover of liberty, and sometimes makes the mistake of confusing liberty and democracy. The two, of course, are not only not identical; they are antithetical. If I were a learned judge, I should sentence Harris to six months in jail, and give him nothing but democratic near-beer to drink and nothing but Lecky to read.

§ 5

The "Glad" Philosophy.—

I

Mortality Statistics from the Official Bulletin.—"There has been an almost continuous increase from year to year since 1900 in the death rates from cancer, organic heart diseases and endocarditis, nephritis, and Bright's disease. The most marked increase for any one of the most important twelve causes of death was that in the rate for cancer, which rose from 63 per 100,000 population in 1900 to 78.9 in 1913. In only two cases did the rate for any year between 1900 and 1913 show a decrease as compared with the preceding year.

"There were 9,988 suicides in the registration area, the rate being 15.8 per 100,000 population; and 58,578 deaths from violence, corresponding to a death rate of 92.5 per 100,000 population. This rate shows a considerable increase as compared with that of the preceding year, which was 88.9."

II

As the Statistics Are Interpreted by the Dr. Frank Cranes.—Happy, indeed, are they whom an all-wise and all-watching Providence has selected from amongst us to lend, with a smile on their lips, their mite toward the almost continuous increase from year to year since 1900 in the going to heaven of those who have been released into eternal happiness by the sweetness of cancer, organic heart diseases and endocarditis, nephritis, and Bright's disease. The most joyous increase for any one of the 12 most blessed causes of everlasting peace was that in the glad rate for cancer, which rose from 63 per 100,000 population in 1900 to 78.9 in 1913—obviously a very much smaller proportion than from 1492 to 1913. In only two sad cases did the rate for any year between 1900 and 1913 show an uncheery decrease in going to heaven as compared with the preceding year.

"There were 9,988 cases of beautiful

unselfishness and personal sacrifice in the registration area, the rate being, however, only 15.8 per 100,000 population—I fear there are many of us, alas, who still think only of our own peace and happiness—and an increase of 58,578 angels from violence, corresponding to a glad release from sorrow of 92.5 per 100,000 population. This rate shows a heart-warming and uplifting increase as compared with that of the unhappy preceding year, which was only 88.9."

§ 6

Lasciate Ogni Speranza.—In the United States the business of criticizing democracy falls under the heading of transcendental intellectual exercises, along with the discussion of the fourth dimension, and is thus lifted above gross utilitarianism and commends itself to pure spirits impatient of practical politics. Flout and condemn the thing as we may, we'll probably never get rid of it—not, at least, until the Japs come from one direction and the League of Nations from the other, and so put an end to the farce. What ails us is the utter lack of a substitute. If not democracy, what? It is impossible to imagine any scheme of things that does not ground itself upon some sort of system of superiorities, upon some sort of aristocracy—and the United States is as bare of an aristocracy as a Methodist bishop is bare of sin and sense.

The plutocracy is obviously nothing of the sort. It lacks all the essentials: a clean tradition, culture, public spirit, courage. It is simply a mob of trembling swindlers, without either honesty or honour. Half a dozen semi-alien youths, meeting in a back-room to denounce the corpse of the Constitution, are enough to scare the plutocracy half to death. Imagine a Percy or a Hohenstaufen taking fright at such a menace!

The case of the native *intelligentsia* is worse. It is composed, in the main, of professors, and 99 per cent of them are constantly in mortal fear of their jobs. Living under such terrors, with the plutocracy scrutinizing them balefully

on one side and the mob ever eager to rise against them on the other, it is no wonder that they become distinguished chiefly for their conformity, ignorance and lack of self-respect, *i. e.*, for the virtues of Congressmen, journalists and butlers, not of aristocrats. A few superior men, of course, survive, but they are stags chained among dogs. Some time ago I had a letter from one of these lonesome survivors on the character of the typical American university president, a leader of culture of a variety unmatched anywhere else in the world. The pressure of the plutocracy, he said, has converted this shoddy magnifico into "a singular combination of despot, pope, hypocrite, liar and knave." Surely no one would seriously deny the charge. The few university presidents who show ordinary intellectual integrity stand out like sore thumbs, and are probably just as uncomfortable. The average is a cad standing midway between a Y. M. C. A. drive manager and a Fifth avenue clergyman.

Yet the university president is the flower of our culture on the learned side—the aristocrat among our intellectuals. . . . Let us, therefore, stick to democracy. It is a bit hoggish, but it might be worse. It will be centuries before we are ready for anything better.

§ 7

The Eternal Cabotin.—Extract from a work entitled "David Wark Griffith: His Life and Career," by Robert Edgar Long:

David Wark Griffith is a modest man. . . . His horror of egotism is perhaps his greatest outstanding characteristic.

Another extract from the same tome:

David Wark Griffith by divine right could be placed alongside Edith Cavell, Joan of Arc, Robert Emmett, Gutenberg, Socrates and all the others.

Yet another:

Artistically, "The Birth of a Nation" ranks with the finest achievements in literature, architecture, painting, music and drama.

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§ 8

The Last Rites.—In my time I have seen nine men put to death, all by hanging—six Methodists, one Baptist, one Episcopalian and one devotee of the Latin rite. Of them all, the Catholic took it most quietly and the Baptist made the most noise. The Episcopalian seemed to suffer most. I doubt that he feared hell, but at all events he was apparently rather doubtful about heaven. He bore the handicap of being consoled by the least confident and reassuring of all the attendant ecclesiastics. This gentleman of God, in fact, went to pieces on catching sight of the gallows, and so the condemned had to be helped up the steps by the hangman.

I present these facts for what they are worth. God knows what their significance is.

§ 9

The Divine Sarah in Vaudeville: Being a Scene from Bernhardt's Late Performance of "The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc" in the French Tongue, and Being Further the Approximate Manner in which the American Vaudeville Audience Comprehended What It Was All About.—

The Dialogue

Jeanne—Je m'appelle Jeanne. Chez nous, on m'appelait Jeannette. De mon surnom, je ne sais rien.

Lemaistre—Vous êtes née?

What the Audience Made of It

Jeanne—Give Jeanne an apple. Chestnuts, or an apple, for little Jeanne! The demon, Sir Nahm, says it is going to rain.

Lemaistre—Nay, nay!

Jeanne—Au village de Domrémy, qui tient aux marches de Lorraine. Notre maison touche l'église, entre le cimetière et le petit ruisseau.

Beaupere—Vos parents?

Jeanne—Mon père a nom Jacques d'Arc. Ma mère. . . . Ma mère, Isabelle Romée.

Lemaistre—Votre âge?

Jeanne—J'ai à peu près dix-neuf ans.

Ysambard—Vos avez passé auprès de votre mère toutes vos enfances?

Jeanne—Qui furent le temps le plus heureux; et appris d'elle mon *Pater*, mon *Ave Maria*, mon *Credo*.

Tiphaine—C'est elle aussi qui vous a enseigné à filer et à coudre?

Jeanne—Oui. Comme couseuse et filandière, je ne crains aucune bourgeoisie de Rouen.

Mailly—Vous travailliez aux champs?

Jeanne—Je ramassais les foins et la moisson; je suivais la charrue.

Luxembourg—Et meniez le bétail?

Jeanne—J'ai souventes fois conduit le troupeau communal à la maison forte, dans l'île de la Meuse, quand les hommes d'armes, tant Bourguignons qu'Anglais, étaient signalés.

Ladvenu—Chose fréquente?

Jeanne—Quasiment journalière. Les trois quarts du temps, celui qui les com-

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Jeanne—The village of Domremy is tainted by the marshes of Lorraine. The notary, a Mason, touched his leg when he entered a cinema with the little Russian.

Beaupere—What kind of parents did you have?

Jeanne—I had a pair of them named Jake Darc. My mare, my mare was called Isabelle Romee.

Lemaistre—Are you at the voting age?

Jeanne—I pray you ask the nephew or aunt of Dorothy Dix.

Ysambard—You have a pass for the opera and have voted to give your mare to the infantry?

Jeanne—The key I was furiously tempted to put on the plush hour-glass; and in April with Della my pater on the Avenue Maria smoked a Crémó.

Tiphaine—Was Ella also there to view an ensign with a filly eat a cud?

Jeanne—Yes. Come, cousin, and philosopher. I crane (my neck) acutely to see a bourgeois ruined.

Mailly—You have traveled with a chump?

Jeanne—The Rameses were fine and moist; I smoked a cheroot.

Luxembourg—And many between?

Jeanne—I got few souvenirs from the communal troops at Fort Mason, but I danced in the aisle with Mose, and he took me home in his arms, tantalizing Bourgoyne who was an angel and had signaled to him.

Ladvenu—You chose frequently?

Jeanne—Casement was a journalist. He drank three quarts at a time; the key

mandait était ce même Pierre de Luxembourg, votre frère, qui devait plus tard me livrer. Il se disait envoyé par vous, Altesse.

Bedford—Il disait vrai!

to the cellar he commanded from Pierre de Luxembourg, a free voter, who had a very sluggish liver. He said he was sent by you to Altman's.

Bedford—You are ill and very dizzy!

§ 10

One-Lunged Culture.—America's gigantic cultural dependence upon England—a dependence so nearly complete that it is difficult to think of any intelligible idea prevailing in the republic that is not English in origin—is probably largely due to the fact that the great majority of Americans, at least of the dominant Anglo-Saxon blood, are wholly monolingual. If they know any foreign language at all, it is almost always French, and even here their knowledge is seldom more than enough to get them through a French novel, sweating haltingly and mistily from adultery to adultery. For an American to read the serious literature of any foreign country in the language of that country is well-nigh unheard of. Even the immigrants of foreign stocks seldom show any curiosity or enterprise in that direction. Nine-tenths of the Italians who come to this country know no more about the literature of Italy than a curb broker knows of the Einstein theory. So with the German-Americans and even the Scandinavian-Americans. The former, taking one with another, are on the cultural level of green-grocers; the latter are chiefly yokels. I know a great many German-Americans, some of them of considerable wealth and even of fashionable pretensions. In the whole lot I can think of but half a dozen who could name offhand the principal works of Thomas Mann, Otto Julius Bierbaum, Ludwig Thoma or Hugo von Hofmannsthal. They know a great deal more about Mutt and Jeff than they know about Hermann Sudermann.

When Continental ideas, whether in metaphysics or the fine arts, penetrate to the United States they always travel by way of England. There the annual

product is sifted out, carefully diluted with English ideas, and put up into packages for the Yankee trade. The English not only get a chance to interpret and embellish; they also choose what ideas Americans are to hear of at all. Whatever fails to interest them, or is in any way offensive to them, never crosses the ocean. This explains why it is that Americans are so densely ignorant of many Continentals who have been celebrated at home for years, for example, Huysmans, Hartleben, Merezhkovsky and Alfred Kerr. It also explains why they so grossly overestimate various third-raters who are laughed at at home, for example, Brieux: these fellows simply happen to interest the English, and are thus palmed off on the boobish colonials of Yankeedom. In the case of Brieux the hocus-pocus was achieved by one man, George Bernard Shaw, a Scotch blue-nose disguised as an Irish patriot and English intellectual. Shaw, at bottom, has the ideas of a Presbyterian clergyman, and so the highfalutin platitudes of Brieux greatly enchanted him. Whereupon he spit upon his hands, wrote a flaming Brieuxiad for the American trade, and in six months had the *intelligentsia* of the States in a fever of excitement.

This wholesale import and export business in Continental fancies is undoubtedly of no little benefit to Americans. If it did not exist they would probably never hear of many of the salient Continentals at all. To this day, there has been no American translation of the plays of Ibsen; we use the William Archer translations, all very bad, but still better than nothing. So with the work of Nietzsche, Anatole France, Georg Brandes, Turgenev, etc. I can think of but one exception: the work of Hauptmann, done into English under

the supervision of Lewisohn. But even here Lewisohn used many English translations of single plays: the English were still ahead of him, though they stopped half way. He is, in any case, an extraordinary American, and an investigation by the Department of Justice would probably show that he was educated at Heidelberg.

The average American professor is far too ignorant to undertake such an enterprise as the translation of Hauptmann. Even when he sports a German Ph.D. one usually finds on examination that all he knows about German literature is that a big seidel of *Hofbräu* in Munich used to cost 27 *Pfennig* downstairs and 32 *Pfennig* upstairs. The German universities were formerly very tolerant of foreigners. Many an American spent a couple of years roaming from one to the other without picking up enough German to read the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Such frauds are now to be found in nine-tenths of our one-building universities, and many of them are eminent local authorities on the crimes of Nietzsche and the imbecilities of Treitschke.

Our worst loss is in the department of French literature. The French are a free-spoken people, not only in matters of sex, but also in matters of religion. Here they collide with English prudery and hypocrisy, and so they are not completely translated. The result is that the American colonial gets a grossly distorted view of modern French letters. Some of the chief Frenchmen of the time come to him fearfully bowdlerized; others are not reshipped at all, and so he never hears of them, save perhaps as awful names. There is, for example, Zola. The American who wants to read Zola and cannot manage the French has to go scouting in dubious second-hand book-stores for gaudy yellow-backs. The Vizetelly translation, a competent and excellent work, was suppressed in England, and hence ceased coming to America. Half of Huysmans is shut out in the same way. So is half of Remy de Gourmont. Now and then the English, on second thought, translate

some Continental who has been under the ban for years. Instantly he is discovered by all of the campus Taines and Lessings of the United States, and in a few months the women's clubs are buzzing with news of him, and American schoolmarmes making the grand tour begin to visit the cafés where he used to get drunk, and to send home picture postcards bearing the portrait of the coloured woman he used to live with.

§ 11

The Ideal Woman (continued).—

1. She never rests both of her elbows upon a restaurant table, cups her face in her palms, and gazes intently at one as if she were deeply impressed with one's personal beauty or conversation.

2. She never, upon finding one of the chambermaid's coarse hair-pins in a man's rooms and knowing perfectly well that it was dropped there by the chambermaid while dusting, holds it up and makes a facetious remark, prefaced with an "Aha!", to the effect that one has doubtless been entertaining some beautiful musical comedy actress.

3. Upon sitting down and crossing her knees, she doesn't with a great display of ingenuousness carefully pull down her skirt three inches below its ordinary standing length.

4. When a waltz is played, she doesn't peremptorily shush a man into silence and sit in rapt quiet, with eyes half-closed, listening to it.

5. When dining with a man for the first time, she doesn't coquettishly decline the spring onions among the hors d'œuvres and thus lead the man to anticipate a willing kiss which she has absolutely no intention of vouchsafing.

6. She can blow a smoke ring without promptly sticking her index finger through it.

7. She does not feel it incumbent upon her, the moment a man sits down to a piano and proceeds to play a Strauss waltz, to sneak up behind him and begin running her fingers through his hair.

8. When she loses money at cards,

she doesn't affect a great air of gaiety by way of hiding her real feelings.

9. Five minutes after she has met a man she doesn't observe, "I think we're going to like each other."

10. While one's back is turned telephoning, she doesn't sneak into one of the other rooms in one's apartment and comb her Pomeranian with one's favourite hair comb, reappearing presently with an innocent look and bringing one unconsciously to go out in public that evening with one's hair smelling like the Mamaroneck Kennels.

§ 12

A Needed Magazine.—It is amazing that no American publisher has ever set up an American *Notes and Queries*. The English periodical of that name, lately taken over by the *London Times*, has been in existence for sixty or seventy years, and there is a flourishing French counterpart, *L'Intermédiaire*. But the United States has nothing of the sort. Surely we need it badly. In no other country in the world is there such a lush crop of historical lies and imbecilities, crying aloud to be run down and disposed of. In none other is there such dense and general ignorance, particularly among the educated classes.

§ 13

Observations on Women by the late M. Honoré de Balzac and How They Have Been Adapted by Our Broadway Playwrights for the Matinée Audiences that Currently Go to the Theater in the Evening.—

I

Balzac: It is woman's instinct to be a tyrant when she is not a slave.

Broadway version: It is man's instinct to be a tyrant when he is not a slave.

II

Balzac: The innocence of girls is like milk, which may be turned by a thunder-

clap, a poisonous scent, a hot day, a nothing, or a mere breath.

Broadway version: The innocence of our beautiful American girls is like Gibraltar, which may not be turned by cannonballs, gatling guns, howitzers, Krupp guns, or dynamite!

III

Balzac: The man who is the instrument of fate in awakening love in a woman's heart is often unaware of his work, and then he leaves it unfinished.

Broadway version: The scoundrel who is the cruel instrument of fate in awakening love in a weak woman's heart is ever unaware of his villainy, and leaves the woman, like a poor, forlorn little flower trodden underfoot on life's highway, broken and withered and tossed aside. . . .

IV

Balzac: Thirty-six is a period of life at which the majority of women discover that they are the victims of the social laws.

Broadway version: Sixteen is the period of life at which all women truthfully discover that they are the victims of man's cruel social laws.

V

Balzac: A woman often relies carelessly on her mere instinct.

Broadway version: A woman's instinct is always superior to the combined minds of Gladstone, Disraeli, Napoleon, Frederick the Great, Schopenhauer, Darwin, Huxley, Renan, Wellington, Grant, Dewey, Farragut, Nelson, Blücher, Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

§ 14

You're Another, Upton.—Dr. Upton Sinclair on the reviews of his late work, "The Brass Check," a furious denuncia-

tion of journalism in all its degraded forms:

Mr. Mencken gives the book a whole article in *The Smart Set*. He has all kinds of clever fun with me, and I appreciate it, because it is much better for an author to be roasted than not to be mentioned at all. Mr. Mencken entirely agrees with me as to the rottenness of American newspapers. But I observe with slight wonderment that he never once mentions magazines.

Once more the ancient Socialistic sport of discovering hobgoblins and atrocities. Dr. Sinclair is evidently an inattentive reader of this great family miscellany. Let him turn to the issue for December, 1916, and he will find enough words to content him, and many ideas that he might have borrowed profitably for his book.



Mad Poet

By E. E. Boylan

*You that never loved me
And you that never will
Walk now beside me
Along the lonely hill.*

*I whisper broken love rhymes
Fraught with you and May,
But the country people gabble:
"The mad poet walks today."*



LOVE is a grove in the woods. Marriage is the grove after the departure of a Sunday School picnic.



A WOMAN is homely in proportion to the nice things said about her by other women.



THREE men proposed to Myrtle. She was good to two of them.



NEVER has a somewhat different significance from *never again*.

Never Argue With a Woman

By T. F. Mitchell

NEVER argue with a woman on any subject whatever. Take my case as a warning. I started arguing with Clarissa as to how much Baudelaire was indebted to Poe for his decadence, and she ended by convincing me that I ought to marry her.



The White Lass Linneth

By A. Newberry Choyce

SHE is gone by, the white lass Linneth
With her folk all in black but she all white;
I heard one cry a little and call it death
And I laughed at the bearers, she would weigh so light.

Dying is sad, I did not think she'd die.
And Death lives in the dark, I did not think she'd go.
The blackthorn bushes as she went by
Were all full-bosomed with their scented snow.

And the dusty brown sparrows out in the road
Chirped at their love lessons aflutter and athrill
When the four men passed with their little light load. . . .
And a strange bell sang till the noon went still.

She is gone by, the white lass Linneth,
And down a quiet lane and far away from me;
A little heap of white which folk call death
Like cold blossom drifted from a blackthorn tree.



ALTHOUGH light travels one hundred and eighty thousand miles a second, it never reaches some people.

At Thirty-three

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

I

SUZANNE WHITTIER stared into her drawing-room fire and sipped black coffee. It was late. The slam of motor doors outside was no longer incessant; the sharp sound was growing so infrequent that she started each time it came to her. Obviously, only a few belated revelers were lingering on at the gay restaurant across the street.

Suzanne was melancholy. She hated lonely vigils; she might at that moment have been the sole surviving inhabitant of New York. She stirred her coffee, sighed and shivered a bit. No matter how cozy and warm the room, she always felt chilled when she sat up alone at unconscionable hours.

Tonight, she had determined not to give way to sleepiness till she had reached a decision; she meant to wake up in the morning with her future clear before her. For the past year, things had become too problematical to be pleasant. Fortified by her black coffee, Suzanne was about to reach a conclusion so definite as to make any future darting back on her traces preposterous.

She was on the brink of matrimony; that she knew. The problem for her at present was not whether she should marry or continue her old independent career; it was rather *whom* she should marry. Two men desired her. Tomorrow she would accept one of them.

She regretted passionately, as she sat there, that she had delayed matters so long; ten years ago she would have been able to arrive at a swift conclusion by merely consulting her heart. She was thirty-three now, however. Inclination

found itself opposed by hard common sense; a whole night of stealthy wakefulness would be necessary to thresh the thing out.

Suzanne had devoted the previous day in equal portions to the rival swains: she had lunched with Gregory Curtis and had had tea with him later at his rooms; Edward Tompkins had claimed her for dinner and the evening. Had she allowed her emotions to sway her, she would have chosen Curtis at once. She was aware that, as his wife, she would soon fall in love with him as helplessly and nonsensically as any schoolgirl.

Without difficulty, she could visualize herself in her new position—unreasonable, adoring, the man's abject slave, with the vision of her old freedom to vex her, with the crash of her self-respect to infuriate her, with the jealous need of keeping him hers at any cost to amaze her and make her wretched.

Curtis loved her, of course; he and she were of the same sphere, as near intellectual equality as a man and woman could be. Well, once they were married, his actual superiority would become appallingly obvious; he would assume control, he would make harsh demands, and she, in her silly infatuation, would soon lose her identity and degenerate into the spiteful, irksome creature that must needs submit, but never with a good grace.

That situation might be all right for a young wife; but for a sophisticated woman it would be exasperating. A *conventional marriage*—the union would resolve itself into that; and Suzanne had come to realize more and more as time went on the dismal, dreary futility, for a proud woman, of the usual conjugal

relation. Unhealthy, sickening,—the epithets couldn't be made too strong to describe the facts of the case. Curtis was a man of the finest stamp; indeed, he was quite the most admirable and fascinating person she had ever known. *Why* hadn't she married him a decade ago? Well, she hadn't and it was too late now to think of submitting to his exactions, to dream of embroiling herself in the moods and tortures of a furious affection.

Tompkins was different; marriage to him would mean an end of all financial worries—and it would mean little else. Suzanne liked the chap; his incurable boyishness, his rough-and-tumble methods were refreshing in their way. Besides, for all his bearishness, he was magnificently imposing; he quite dwarfed the slender, nervous Curtis, when it came to a physical comparison.

Unlimited money, physical glamour—Suzanne saw with decided keenness the attractive qualities of the combination. For her, however, the great asset lay in the fact that *she* would rule, as Tompkins' wife, that she would carry on her life with all the high-handed independence she had found so invigorating in the years she had run her own establishment. The man worshipped her as a creature of more than earthly perfections; he was, as it were, in a perpetual genuflection before her and would accept her decrees through all the future years as hallowed utterances that it would be sacrilegious to question. Yes, without a doubt Tompkins was the comfortable, the unperplexing candidate.

Suzanne, with a pang as of renunciation, let her thoughts rest now on Curtis. How would he take her acceptance of the other man? Ah—she knew; she saw his clear, fine eyes with an ironic twinkle in them. He would raise his brows ever so delicately, smile in all politeness, then bring his lips together in a thin line of hostility. By her decision, she would prove to him how little, after all, she was worth. They would continue to be casual friends; they would dine together, lunch together, have delightful chats.

Married to the coarse-grained Tomp-

kins, she'd need more than ever the intellectual stimulation Curtis could communicate. Still, things wouldn't be the same. She wouldn't count with him in future; and she had always so relished his air of respect, of polite fervour! Virginia Phayre's designs on him had ever amused Suzanne; one of the sweetest satisfactions in the past had been Virginia's helplessness. Now—But she must be reconciled to his marrying the other woman at some vague future date.

Suddenly, Suzanne sprang up from her chair.

"That silly fool—that simpleton!"

A crash of china that echoed in the stillness like a bursting shrapnel brought her a pause. She had smashed her coffee-cup.

Suzanne, standing in the middle of the room, broke into a low laugh.

"If that's the way I feel now," she reflected shrewdly, "what a jealous vixen I should be in six months."

She dropped to her knees and, while she gathered up the fragments, announced half-aloud in a tone of inspired conviction, "Of course, it's *got* to be Ned Tompkins!"

II

"THERE'S no sense in glossing things over, you know. Simple, coarse as the devil and straightforward—that's marriage, as I see it. It doesn't pay to be finicky. The more primitive and unlovely the business is, the *safer* it is. The minute a man or woman goes in for subtle reservations and delicate shadings, the element of danger appears. It's no time for diplomacy, Suzanne. A husband and wife belong to each other, that's all there is to it. I'm *part* of you now, just as much as your teeth or your ears are."

They were spending the first week of their married life at Tompkins' Long Island place. Suzanne sat on the balustrade of the porch that let out from her bedroom; for a moment, she weighed her husband's words without comment. In apparent abstractedness, she sur-

veyed the blue Sound and whistled an arpeggio softly.

Tompkins, lounging beside her, watched her with a keen intensity. Suzanne refused to meet his eyes; she turned her back deliberately to him and, leaning forward with impulsive rashness, broke off two or three blossoms from the topmost boughs of the magnolia tree just beneath the balcony. Tompkins grasped her firmly by the shoulders and laid his cheek with clumsy tenderness against hers.

"Thank you," she said with studied carelessness when she had gathered her immense bouquet. She freed herself and buried her face in the blooms. Then, letting them tumble pell-mell into her lap, she confronted him.

"You really can't expect me to share your views, Ned," she remarked. "I belong to myself, not to you. Marriage *doesn't* change things nowadays. I'm thirty-three, remember; I've lived my own life so long that I shall have to go on consulting myself first in everything. I can be coarse, I suppose, but I can't be simple."

He dropped down beside her on the balustrade; with his face close to hers, he regarded her intensely.

"Do you think I'll let you lead your own life now?" he asked. "It's out of the question, I tell you. You're mine, Suzanne; you belong to me, not to yourself."

She shrugged uneasily and closed her eyes.

"I married you, because I wanted to keep my freedom," she told him. "I was sure that you, of all people, would see the absurdity of trying to make me over."

She paused.

"Well—" she wound up at length, "I still intend to keep my freedom."

"But you don't understand!" He was patient. "I don't mean to rule *you* and do as I please myself. Not a bit of it! You're to give up everything but me and I'm to give up everything but you. That's logical, that's sane. We devote our entire life to each other—and throw overboard every old association."

Suzanne smiled vaguely as she listened to the laboured plea.

"You mean by that, of course," she reminded him, "that it's up to me to throw Gregory Curtis overboard. Nothing will induce me to do such a thing. I need him quite as keenly now as I did a week ago. You're a dear, Ned, I'm not denying it; but I should go insane if there was nobody else to talk to. Do you think for a moment we should be happy? No, no!"

Tompkins threw an arm about her shoulders and drew her to him. When he spoke, it was in a tone of decision.

"I'm not so damned convincing at argument, but I know what's right. You're my wife; you've got to take me as I am, you've got to know me as you've never known anything before."

His arm tightened its hold; Suzanne shivered a little and opened her eyes. They contemplated each other for a long moment.

"Look at me, Suzanne," he murmured. "Do you think for an instant you'll lead your own life? Do you think you belong to *yourself*?" His voice rose to a jubilant, triumphant note. "Why, you little fool, you'll see nothing but me till your dying day; you'll see nothing but me, whether I'm drunk or sober, whether I'm awake or asleep, whether I'm decent or low. And you'll grow to love it, Suzanne. We'll keep back nothing from each other. You'll learn what's fine in me, you'll learn what's bad; and you'll give back as good as I send, before you've done. That's marriage—actually. Men are a vulgar lot; once you accept that, you'll be happy."

Suzanne, swept off her feet and into his arms, trembled uncontrollably. She had neither the strength nor the desire now to combat him. Before his lips closed on hers, however, she had forged the resolve to give battle directly they had returned to New York.

III

THEY went to an hotel for the Spring months. Suzanne had insisted on an extravagant refurbishing and a thorough

scouring of Tompkins' ugly house. "It reeks of tobacco and decaying horse-hair," she had told him. "It's dreadful."

Tompkins had acquiesced blithely.

At the end of the first week, Suzanne had accomplished much. With the oil-paintings, in particular, she had been brutal.

"Now, Ned!" she remarked one morning. "We must get rid of these Gerômes and Bouguereaus. Present them to the Metropolitan—or to some club where you're influential enough to inflict a few tortures—"

Tompkins was obedient. He scurried about and a few days later announced in triumph,

"I've found a rather smart dealer who'll take the whole lot, I think. I'm to meet him at the house tomorrow evening and show him around."

"I say, Suzanne," he remarked at dinner that night, "I hope you won't be lonesome without me. These Jewish chaps do wrangle like the devil. I may not get home till all hours."

She smiled. "Oh, I shall manage beautifully. Gregory Curtis and I are dining together. My wedding interrupted a fascinating game of chess; Gregory and I'll finish it at his rooms to-morrow night."

Tompkins said nothing for a moment. Then,

"Of course you don't mean it," he ventured.

"Indeed I do," she returned. "I can't ever hope to live up to your ideas about marriage, Ned. There's no sense in my trying it. I told you I meant to keep my freedom; the sooner I prove it to you the better."

Tompkins stared at his plate.

Suzanne, breathing more freely now that she had won her point, gave the conversation a veer.

"I'll be so glad to see the last of those pictures," she said. "You don't know how they've depressed me. The very thought of being on intimate terms with all those naked French nymphs! Really, how *could* people—?"

Tompkins interrupted her.

"What in hell does he take me for, anyhow? Of course, I don't blame you, Suzanne; women are always a bit indiscreet. But that's all the more reason why decent men should be careful. It's simply an insult!"

"Oh, Ned, will you be sensible?" Suzanne wailed. "It isn't Gregory's fault. I planned it; he couldn't have got out of it to save his neck."

"Couldn't have got out of it!" Tompkins mocked. "Good Lord, Suzanne, don't think I'm an idiot."

He turned his attention to his salad; with his mouth full, the urge to speech seized him once more. He mumbled out something.

"What is it?" Suzanne leaned forward politely.

"Oh, nothing!" Tompkins replied. As a matter of fact, his unintelligible words had been, "What the devil does he take me for? What the *devil*—"

The remainder of dinner was quite uneventful and rather dreary.

When they had returned to the drawing-room, Tompkins paced up and down for a time. Suzanne lit a cigarette and, smoothing her gown daintily, sank down on the divan. She piled the pillows up first one way and then another; she snuggled into them, burrowing vaguely with her nose, then raised herself on one elbow and tried a new arrangement. She gave a pat here and a touch there; at last, in weary vexation, she swept the whole lot of cushions over the edge and nestled in a denuded corner.

"What fiend do you suppose invented hotel divans?" she wondered half-aloud.

Tompkins ignored the flippant question. He strode over to her and sat down heavily beside her.

"I'll have to ask you to do something for me," he said.

"You want me to put Gregory off." She considered it. "And if I refuse, Ned? Wouldn't you be in rather a fix then? Wouldn't that tie your hands—and make you seem a bit silly? Heaven help the man who appears a fool in his wife's eyes!"

"There's no danger!" he told her. "I'm not averse to using force, you see."

"I don't think I'd look such a fearful ass if it came to that."

Suzanne mused.

"Oh, but you would, Ned!" she decided at length. "A *fearful ass!*"

They laughed.

Suzanne, drawing her slippers feet under her, turned abruptly and faced her husband.

"This sounds absurd and infantile," she said, "but it's really a big moment. It shows, you understand, that I do intend to control my own destiny."

"You little fool! As if you had a chance!" Tompkins fixed his blazing eyes on her. Of a sudden he bent forward, grasped her shoulders and tumbled her backwards off the divan and into the inviting nest of cushions. Tangled in the mazes of her train, she struggled helplessly, furiously, to get up. Tompkins, with a burst of merriment, caught her as she half rose and imprisoned her between his knees. He threw an arm about her neck and pressed the hand against her mouth. Then he reached for the telephone on the table directly back of the divan.

After he had sent in his call, he contemplated his wife grimly. She writhed in an unavailing frenzy; her cries, muffled by his hand, seemed to come from an immense, a ridiculous distance.

"Ah, yes!" He'd evidently got his connection. "Kindly inform Mr. Curtis that Mrs. Tompkins is engaged tomorrow evening. Thank you—"

Even after he had hung up, he didn't let her go. He took his hand away from her mouth; the arm about her neck tightened and he pressed her face against his own.

"Little mistaken fool! What do *you* take me for?" he mumbled while he kissed her. "You haven't a show, I tell you. Nobody, nothing but me till your dying day, remember. You'll learn before long that I'm quite enough, God knows!"

IV

"I DIDN'T expect to find you in, really. I don't think I should have dared to

come, Gregory, if I'd suspected you were here," Suzanne confessed with a radiant smile. "Just throw my wraps over that chair, please. I shall need them directly. I'm going in a moment. No, thanks, not that comfortable seat! Give me something with a straight back, something that will stick into me and drive me home early." She measured the furniture with a critical eye. "Ah—the piano-bench! That's what I'm after." She sat down gingerly on the edge of it and laughed at his stupefaction.

"What under the sun's the trouble?" Curtis gasped. "Don't tell me you're afraid of me, Suzanne. Has Tompkins been implying things about my reputation?"

"Good heavens, no! He wouldn't know how to imply things. He blurts out the truth in the most disconcerting way."

"He calls a spade a spade, eh, and I'm one of the dirty fellows?" Curtis grinned affably.

"We quarreled last night—about *you*," Suzanne remarked. "My husband thinks that, for a woman, marriage wipes out the past—particularly the male portion of it. You were a test case, the first of many, I hope. Didn't his telephone message rather surprise you?"

"Indeed it did," he acknowledged. "I stayed in tonight because I hoped for just this. It *was* a wonderful chance for self-assertion."

"The humiliating part of it is that I'm scared to death," she returned. "I'll smoke one cigarette with you—and then I'm off. Do you know, Gregory, I may not have the courage to tell him I disobeyed."

"Ah, that would be low, Suzanne. If you don't, I will."

"No, no!" she cried. "He'd give you a black eye in some public place. I shall tell him myself; but I shan't have any great joy in the telling. See what marriage does for one!"

They lit up.

"Now, no more about Ned or I shan't have the courage to finish my smoke," she warned him.

She swung around on the bench and

fingered the music open on the piano. "Ah—you've bought some new things," she said. "'Coq d'Or, piano partition pour quatre mains.' 'L'Oiseau de Feu, piano partition pour quatre mains.' 'Sadko, piano partition — pour quatre mains,'" she read half aloud.

They were silent for a moment.

"Yes—all for four hands," he told her. "Rather dreary, isn't it?"

"Do you play them with Virginia?" she asked.

She felt repentant, directly she had said it.

"My God, no!" he protested. "Virginia's fingers aren't even all thumbs. They're all toes."

He sat down casually beside her.

"You're facing the music at this moment, Suzanne," he reminded her. "Forgive the bad joke and let's begin." His foot was already on the pedal.

She threw her cigarette into the fireplace.

"Very well!" she said. It would have been downright cruelty to refuse his plea.

It was past midnight when Tompkins appeared in the doorway. He had come to call for his wife, he had informed the man, and had been ushered in without question. Suzanne and Curtis had been so much engrossed in the magnificent, crashing hurly-burly of the last few pages of "*Schéhérazade*" that they had heard nothing. Tompkins let them finish.

"Now I must be going. Good heavens, what will my husband say?" wailed Suzanne. She sprang up, found herself face to face with him and burst into a peal of nervous laughter.

"How dreadful!" she exclaimed. "And I distinctly told you it was to be an evening of *chess*. Forgive me, Ned; I had no idea—really—"

Tompkins had decidedly the advantage. Suzanne was quite unable to conceal her terror; Curtis was at a loss, very much bewildered and perceptibly embarrassed. There was a painful silence while Tompkins helped Suzanne with her wraps.

Then,

"Curtis," he announced, "if I ever find you again with my wife, I'll knock your damned head off. I'm not the sort to share her with anybody, you understand."

Curtis brought his lips together and said nothing. He repressed his anger admirably. Suzanne knew as she looked at him that her husband, by his insult, had killed the other man's interest in her. She was for him on the instant merely a partner in a sordid alliance.

"I apologize for my husband, Gregory," she said firmly. "Of course, I can't hope to have our friendship go on after this. You've been humiliated—because of me. I am sorry."

That was all. Neither Suzanne nor Tompkins said a word on the way home. Arrived at the hotel, Suzanne swept haughtily and with rapid steps across the drawing-room; Tompkins followed her in dogged determination. He opened her dressing-room door for her and, when she had entered, he stepped across the threshold.

"I thought you might be tempted to lock me out," he vouchsafed carelessly.

"So I'm to have no privacy at all while I'm your wife?" she asked with bitterness.

"Certainly not! Such a romantic, schoolgirl notion! It doesn't go in marriage; it's preposterous, Suzanne."

By a flood of angry tears, she confessed to her utter helplessness before him.

V

"How perfectly disgraceful! How horrid!" Suzanne bit her lip in an attempt to appear dignified and disapproving. Tompkins watched her. Her effort failed; her mouth widened to a smile and escaped from the imprisoning teeth. Then she surrendered perforce and burst into a merry laugh. "Really, women are dreadful creatures; they're *much* worse than men."

Tompkins guffawed delightedly at the success of his ribald anecdote.

"It's God's truth, too," he announced with pride. "Her chauffeur told Emile—"

As usual, Tompkins was drinking his morning coffee in Suzanne's bedroom. He always appeared, cup and saucer in hand, for an informal chat before he settled down to the business of bathing and shaving. He sat now on the edge of her bed and stroked his shaggy chin reflectively. He wasn't yet quite awake; his frequent, prodigious yawns bore witness to that. Suzanne, propped up by pillows, munched toast with evident relish.

"We're a shameless pair," she said at length. "Whatever became of our manners, I wonder? You look like a perfect coal-heaver, Ned; and I probably have marmalade or butter on my chin. Oh, dear, why do I thrive so in these surroundings? A year ago, I couldn't have stood it. And now!" She shrugged. "I have the greatest appetite even for breakfast; and the *thought* of breakfast used to vex me."

Tompkins chuckled, dug his knuckles into his eyes sleepily and, stretching out his arms, accompanied the gesture with an audible yawn.

"Didn't I tell you how it would be?" he wanted to know then. "All you had to do was to forget the silly rot you'd been brought up on. You married with the idea that everything would be delicate and pretty and so refined, didn't you? Silly rot! You were sure there'd be a lot of politeness, that you and your husband would spend most of the time trying to lift marriage to an exalted plane, and avoiding each other's eyes when there'd been a relapse. Silly rot! Men are a vulgar lot, remember."

He grinned broadly at her and followed it up. "Well, so are women, though they've been taught to believe they're something aloof and beautiful. That's what makes people unhappy, Suzanne. They really *know* they're rather rum, but they can't bear to confess it—so they suffer and mope and feel damned discouraged. You were like that; it was my task to cure you. A husband and wife have got to be inseparable and to know each other; the minute they accept the fact that honesty and simplicity and coarseness are the real attributes of hu-

man beings, the only ones that count, for that matter,—why, then they're all right, Suzanne!"

She shook her head and smiled.

"I don't believe a word of all that," she told him. "The point is, you've simply reduced me to your level. You've *made* me a vulgar sort. I certainly don't consider it the great and noble service you seem to. For seven months, you've given me not a moment's rest; I've seen only you. Naturally, *you're* coarse; how could I avoid growing so myself?"

"Listen to me, Suzanne." He bent over her earnestly. "Aren't you happy?"

She laughed. "Yes, indeed—disgustingly so."

"Aren't you perfectly content?" he pursued.

"Of course I am," she protested.

"Well then, what's the row?" he asked. "Before you married me, you weren't so devilishly happy or content, now were you?"

"No—that's quite true. I used to 'suffer and mope and feel damned discouraged,' as you put it."

He was jubilant. "There—you *see*! I've taught you to be yourself and to give up trying the other stunt. People had better wait till they get to heaven before they give up being human."

Suzanne meditated for a moment.

"But the trouble is," she objected, "we don't love each other. I live with you and accept you glibly enough. I certainly don't respect you, though. We've reduced marriage to the lowest possible plane. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves; instead, we're inclined to boast."

She paused, then faced him with decided abruptness. "Do *you* respect *me*?"

"Not a damned bit," he acknowledged in all frankness. "If I did, I should be miserable; it's a horrible grind attempting to live up to somebody."

"And you used to adore me." Her tone was accusing.

"But from the first I knew it wouldn't last after I'd married you." He was shamelessly honest.

"You do admit, then, that you don't love me?" She sighed.

"Oh, no!" His head-shake was ener-

getic. "I call my feeling for you love; it *is* love. Don't you see how it is? I consider you part of myself; and a man always loves himself, no matter what he's like or what he does. Nothing else counts in this world. It's the same with you. You've learned to accept me in just the way you've accepted yourself for thirty-three years. We've grown *together*. It does sound intricate—but it's really so simple."

He deposited his cup and saucer on her tray and got up.

"Having a baby will be like everything else," Suzanne reflected. "Simple and straightforward and coarse—"

"As the devil." He finished the sentence for her.

They laughed.

"We're incorrigible," Suzanne remarked. "But at least we have one virtue—we aren't sentimental. We don't set each other upon a pedestal. We're planted in good moist earth side by side. That makes for equality. We don't aspire or burst into heavenly blossoms. We just burrow. We're happy and contented, because there's nobody to live up to, only somebody to live *with*. Don't think I'm complaining, Ned; I'm not. I get much more satisfaction out of being coarse than I ever got out of being refined. I'm stuck deep in the earth beside you; I love my degradation and I'm thriving on it."



The Art of the Movies

By Arthur Carter

A SUB-TITLE from a recent thriller:
"Quick, Myra, here come the alligators!"



AT the farewell party that a popular bachelor gives to his boon companions on the eve of his marriage, all present are genuinely sorry. They realize that it is the last party he will attend, for a couple of months.



CAUSES: wine, woman and song. Effects: Head-ache, heart-ache, ear-ache.



LIFE is a ride on a roller-coaster—a few bumps and it's over.

Epithalamium

By Marion Abt

THEY had finished their dinner. Guessing that he hankered for his pipe, she said, "You run along now, dear. I'll just clear the table and join you in a moment." He looked a little sheepish as he went: it was disconcerting to have anyone read you so easily—though he supposed after two years of married life it was inevitable, too.

She took the dishes into the kitchenette, put them in the basin, filled it, made sure that the back door was locked and the ice-box closed, thinking as she did so that it was funny the way people came to understand each other after a short time of living together in the closeness of a three-room flat. All the little, everyday things, the simple, everyday wants and desires no longer needed to be expressed. At most a gesture, a smile, the beginning of a sentence sufficed. As for other things, deeper, more poignant. . . .

She went out onto the little porch where he sat smoking.

"There's some interesting dope on the railroads in that book I brought home," he said.

"Yes." She was quiet for a moment. Then: "There'll be a lovely sky," she said.

Watching her, he divined easily the mood she was in. He would not try to talk. Better to leave her alone when she looked like that, for he knew she preferred to be silent at these times, when some beauty, hidden from other eyes, perhaps, had caught and held her own. She yielded herself to beauty, he thought, as a young girl yields to her first lover, and came back from it always a little subdued and rueful, as a young girl

coming from her first taste of love.

There was a little bit of sky visible from their miniature porch. She watched it eagerly, lovingly. Her eyes fondled it as a miser's fingers fondle his gold. It was coloured mauve and coral and flaming red. She knew, not with her eyes, but with her finger-tips, that it was exquisitely soft. She thought how nice it would be to lay her cheek against it, and with the thought her cheek itself acquired a new and marvelous softness.

It was only a bit of sky, with the apartment building opposite cutting it off straight and sharp. There was a chimney, too—but the smoke from the chimney was blue and floated up in languorous, swirling lines. Only drop your eyes from the sky to the apartment building and you lost beauty; forever. . . . But here eyes were steady, not even her thoughts wandered beyond the oasis. . . .

She sat very still for a long time. It seemed to her that her soul had left her body and was mingled with the curling, vagrant smoke; that her soul, like some solitary dandelion thistle, had puffed dreamily away and left her body shivering behind. . . .

Her body shivered with happiness. Her eyes were happy in the flaming red and coral and mauve, and in the almost swooning languor of the smoke; all of her was happy in the melting softness that made it, too, feel melting soft. But her silly soul, with an inexplicable hurt in it, had gone wandering off, searching, searching, she knew not where, nor for what.

She felt suddenly and intolerably lonely. Then she remembered that she

was not alone; that her husband was beside her. Her husband, whom she loved. She turned her head to look at him. His pipe, drooping limply from his hand, had gone out. His full, sensitive lips were compressed, his dark eyes were hotly angry. She smiled the little, rueful smile he himself had remarked, and looked away again, wondering tenderly what enemies he had vanquished while she dreamed, what institutions he had destroyed, what economic theories laid low. . . .

Something, that small gesture of hers perhaps, had aroused him, and his mood also was destroyed. Seeing her bowed head and a certain tenseness in her hands, he got a new and vividly personal realization of the thing that had been troubling him all evening. It distressed him that in his thinking as an economist he must handle people in the mass, without knowledge of their individual queerinesses.

Even those who lived in the same building with him, above him and below him and next door—he planned and re-ordered their lives as he planned his re-ordering of all society, yet they turned to him only the curtained windows of their flats, revealing nothing of their human pain. And, he wondered a little wistfully, was there much difference be-

tween the back of his wife's head and *their* blank and sightless window panes?

Sitting side by side in the evening dimness, they were silent and very still. Their faces were averted, for they were thinking how easily people read each other after only two years of married life, and each of them was determined to hide within himself his aching sense of loneliness and isolation. . . .

A comb in her hair loosened, and the soft brown mass slipped down from the top of her head. Mechanically, with an almost automatic response to a familiar stimulus, he bent and kissed her head. She crept into his arms, desolate, and yet suddenly hopeful. The warmth of his body comforted her. She rubbed her forefinger softly up and down his cheek. A bitter understanding of what was happening to them hovered near his consciousness. But he wrenched himself loose of it and, with fierce desperation, kissed her lips. She was pressed so close to him that it seemed as though they were welded together for eternity. A sense of relief and triumph trembled in them both. Passionately, as dying men cling to life, they clung to their moment of ecstasy, each thinking that in the perfectness of that union he could hide from himself his everlasting solitude.



Knight Errantry (1920)

By R. Jere Black, Jr.

A FRANTIC woman dashed madly up the beach to where the tanned young Hercules basked idly in the sunlight.

"O sir," she cried, "save my drowning daughter!"

Hercules lighted a cigarette.

"Is she pretty?" he queried.



Violets for Sentiment

By Neeta Marquis

I

WHILE the afternoon was yet young, Harriet Lemoyne let herself into her bungalow apartment in the pleasant consciousness that she was a favoured woman, able to leave in the hands of skilled subordinates the business built up by her own brain while she retired to perfumed privacy for the perusal of a love-letter from over the water—a letter from an undeclared lover, to be sure, but one who was none the less a husband in the making.

If she had been the kind of woman who sings to herself she would have hummed exultantly,

*"There are smiles that have a tender meaning,
That the eyes of love alone may see."*

As it was, the corners of her mouth lifted happily and her full dark eyes brightened as she removed her pretty street frock, smoothed it and put it away on a satin hanger scented with a sachet compounded for her exclusive use. Neither success nor happiness would ever make Harriet Lemoyne careless with the things for which she now paid a large fraction of her income. With sensuous satisfaction she slipped into a quilted robe of heliotrope silk likewise exhaling the fragrance and, gathering together several apparently unrelated articles from her dressing-table, settled herself to a luxurious hour before the grate in her blue-and-brown living-room.

The letter, with its Oriental stamp, had come in the morning mail, but she had reserved it for this time of unhur-

ried solitude. Four months had now passed since she had written Allan of her mother's death. It was the new, surprising note of tenderness in his letters penned since he had received that word which had made her turn a freshly estimating eye upon her hitherto amply sufficient life.

Still fingering the sealed envelope with anticipatory enjoyment, she let her glance wander about the room, taking note of the imprint it already bore of Allan's personality. If his lot had been cast in an art school instead of a mercantile art establishment, he would doubtless be painting pictures by now instead of being merely an authority on porcelains. There were the two charming shore-marines he had helped her select, by the young painter for whom he prophesied big things; the restful wood-interior he had given her mother the Christmas before he went away; the unusual books he had added to the shelves by the fireplace, and his latest gift—the vase of pigeon's-blood cloisonné that glowed like a flaming jewel against the brown and dull-blue of the wall panel. Refinement, distinction, individuality—that was Allan all over.

She took up his photograph, which she had placed on the tabourette beside her chair, to heighten the illusion of hearing him speak while she read his written words. Only twenty-seven and yet, with that characteristic grave directness in his dark gray eyes with their noticeable black lashes, he appeared thirty or more. Emergency representative of the great importing firm of Dale & Shippman, sent to the Orient in place of the regular man, who was ill—and

he had begun life as an orphan errand-boy!

Until recent weeks she had considered twenty-seven an utterly impossible age. It was what had established the easy brother-and-sister give-and-take of their earlier association. She winced now every time she thought of it in the light of a new relationship; and yet, it was nobody's business but their own.

Taking up the ivory hand mirror from the tabourette, she studied her image with deliberate and impersonal eyes. Anyone would declare she did not look her actual thirty-five by at least eight years. There was no gray in her thick black hair; there were no lines in her round face; her colour was a bit solid perhaps, but genuine, and there was plenty of it. She had once overheard herself described as a handsome woman with a hard finish; eyes brilliantly black, somewhat prominent, but with compensating lashes; mouth not beautiful, though her teeth were good—the expression too set for the softness of charm; but a woman cannot compel her steady advancement in business for fifteen years without having the record written somewhere.

Her mind went back over the four years in which Allan Stratton had shared with her and her mother this attractive apartment, with its sun porch and bougainvillea-hung pergola. The rent of it was such that at first she had been thriftily willing to sublet one room to so desirable a tenant as he. After that, his extreme courtesy to her mother had been all that was needed to put him on a footing of intimacy. How many holiday luncheons and dinners he had shared with them! How many pleasures he had planned, often for both, sometimes only for her; plays, symphony concerts—symphonies were a chore to her, though she never let him suspect the fact—and the frequent art exhibits which he never missed.

Even such of these things as were extraneous to her tastes had all helped to colour her personality. With the clear-sightedness that was one of her best business assets, she admitted that Allan

had the more truly cultivated mind of the two, despite his haphazard education. Her own years at Vassar had served merely to confirm her along the more general cultural lines rather than to develop any inherent passion for beauty or learning. With an element of the sturdy commonplace in her make-up, she freely acknowledged to herself the material ends toward which she had worked ever since forced into bread-winning. Like a superior piece of stationary mechanism, she had steadily drawn to herself, by the dependable pulleys of a keen mind and inborn business sense, advantage after advantage until now, her body preserved in absolute health, she had income enough and leisure enough to justify the cultivation of the ornamental virtues.

Marriage with a man like Allan would form a fitting climax. Moreover, it would supply a balance for the loss of her mother. A single life was rather lonely, though she reflected that as a daughter she had little to regret. She had been lavish with the material comforts, and had given for the most part an amiable companionship. True, she had domineered at times. Her ruthless disposal of that walnut wardrobe and other fusty heirlooms rather disturbed her in solitary retrospect. But sentiment could be overdone. It would have been foolish to let a few ancient associations mar the harmony of their new furnishings.

But such reminiscence made for discomfort. She nimbly switched her thoughts back to Allan. Why should she not encourage this new feeling of tenderness, doubtless born of loneliness in the impermanent exotic life he was now living, and of the sorrow of their mutual bereavement in the loss of her mother? A little difference in years on the wrong side was preferable to disparity on any other vital point.

No one knew better than she the predominating selfishness of men. Allan was one in a thousand, tried out by the acid-test of association in the same apartment. With his nice, dear ways, he could help her make a home to which

she would be proud to invite such friends as it was best to retain. His income before he went away was less than her own, but he was of the stuff for advancement. Even if he were in the luxury-list, for that matter, she could afford him, and let the gossips say what they would! She need not give up her own business until it was decided whether he should retain his new status with the firm, anyway. A few hours a week at the office for her would still leave time for a fashionable club and the social diversions she glimpsed in perspective, provided by certain of her mother's old-time intimates.

She had been too busy heretofore to profit by her mother's connections, but now was the time—using the delicate business phrase—to cash in on them. . . . This letter doubtless bore word relating to Allan's anticipated return. . . . She would have him to dinner the first night, serving the simple home things he liked best—scalloped oysters—creamed potatoes—chocolate cake. She would wear her little orchid silk with the transparent sleeves—her arms did keep their roundness well.

Afterward, they would sit here by the fire. He would say that everything seemed so homelike and good after the alien conditions of Oriental life, but that he missed her mother. Then he would add slowly that of course, with her mother gone, he could not stay on in his old quarters, unless . . . unless . . .

He would move over beside her . . . would take her hand in that quiet, decisive way of his . . . and then it would all be settled, simply and suitably.

II

SOMEWHAT tremulously she opened the letter. It was written from Kobe.

A little surprised pang seized her at the first line—"not coming home yet. Have to go back into China to superintend a new pattern in bronze. The model made from my order is unsatisfactory—will have to stay there until results are obtained, and then come back here to finish up."

Then her eyes leaped to a significant sentence: "Because of this, I'm going to tell you what I had meant to keep back until my return . . ."

The steady red of her cheeks spread and flowed down the smooth curves of her throat, even to the white shoulders touched by the heliotrope silk. She had not anticipated the definite move before he came back.

The gratification of the moment deserved to be prolonged. Dropping the letter in her lap, she leaned back in a happy, dreamy languor. . . . And this was . . . love . . . was it? It must be. She had always discounted as extraneous the raptures delineated in story-books. This quiet sense of well-being—of gratified ambition and personal preference and woman-longing for her own man-possession—did it not offer a better foundation for contentment than a wild passion calculated to disturb all that was orderly in life? She was glad that her answer had been determined before the question came. There would now be no more weighing, arguing, shrinking, wondering, but only this calm culmination of judgment plus inclination.

She bent her well-coiffed head to the letter once more, swift, exultant plans darting across her practical mind. It would have been a gratification to her mother to know this.

But her fingers suddenly tightened on the thin paper.

She caught her lips in her even teeth.

What did this say? . . . "a little girl in the store. We didn't know each other well enough for me to make sure before I left, but it has grown plain through our letters. It seems hardly fair to her to tell even you now, but as I sha'n't be back soon I can't keep it to myself any longer. I'm going to ask you to go to see her for me. She is so young and so alone. You two, now that your dear mother is gone, are the women I admire and cherish above all others in the world."

It was unthinkable—unthinkable. There must be some mistake. . . . But

her clear mind could not reject the import of a second reading.

Weakness overcame her for a few bewildering moments. But anger soon sent the blood pounding through her veins again—anger not toward Allan, but toward the one who had interfered as she was about to take possession of him.

"A little girl in the store."

Oh, how well she knew the type!—some little blonde chit in impossible French heels and silk hose sleazy enough to strain milk through!—the kind of girl that didn't know the difference between insolence and dignity—who thought a vicious display of temper could be adequately atoned for by an effortless apology!

How could Allan, of all men, be cozened by such a girl? Oh, she was pretty, no doubt! And distance worked astonishing things with the imagination of an idealistic and lonely man. . . . Pretty . . . and young.

Harriet suddenly felt all her thirty-five years, each one laid across her back like a penalty. Her other successes were futile if she had failed herself now. A bleakness came into her face. She deserved better than this.

But her spirit rose again combatively. A new spark kindled in her eyes. Allan, too, deserved better than to be made the victim of a chinaware salesgirl's romantic whim!

An idea in her executive mind was speedily welded into resolution. He had asked her to see the girl. She would do so—and rescue him from the threatening result of this mood born of isolation from his own kind. It was difficult to visualize the grave, courteous, reasonably sophisticated Allan Stratton as carried away by a flurry of sentiment; yet, a man left to his own homesick fancies in a distant land is not one to use the soberest judgment.

It devolved upon her, his closest woman-friend—almost his *family*—to pave the way for the breaking of the foolish pact. Finesse backed by inflexible determination had enabled her to put through many a deal more difficult.

She would do it as painlessly as possible—but trust her to be thorough! When she had finished, no lingering sentimental hopes would engage this tawdry little counter coquette. Allan would come to his senses upon his return, when matters resumed normal proportions in his mind. He would then rejoice in his escape, and make the wiser choice.

A moment more and she was looking over her wardrobe with an eye to the most impressive of its contents. She would see the interloper while her feelings were fresh and clear. The girl would probably reach home soon after five-thirty.

She searched the telephone book for the apartment house named in Allan's letter. Yes, here it was, as she had imagined, in that cheap section in the northwest hills. . . . Hello . . . could they tell her when Miss Hazel Thorne would be in? . . . Was in now?—Oh, she had been ill! Was it safe for anyone to see her? No, no announcement necessary.

With coldly energetic fingers, she hooked, buttoned and wrapped herself into a *crêpe* afternoon frock and sable coat. When she adjusted her smart hat with the iridescent wing she was glad she had taken this trouble. The result both justified and fortified her. No millionaire's wife in the city was calculated more convincingly to overawe a flirty little "saleslady" in bargain crockery.

III

ON the street she bought two bunches of violets to fasten in the rich furs at her breast. Certain sentimentalists, she knew, never wore violets unless they received them as a gift of love or friendship. She had once bought them only for her mother. But she was quite willing to take them for herself now in exchange for money. The distinctive touch of them on one's person was the main thing.

As she entered the apartment house, with its cheap veneer of modernity, she was glad that she was not only beautifully but warmly dressed, for the sun-

less halls were fifteen degrees more chill than the bright winter air outside. At the door of Miss Thorne's apartment she experienced just a flash of compunction over the unfair advantage she was taking of her adversary, which gave her face and manner a shade of softness she had not intended—at least, that was the only way she could account for the reception she received.

"Oh!" cried the girl who opened the door to her knock, extending slim, welcoming hands before Harriet could speak. "Oh, I just know you are Miss Lemoine! How more than good and kind of you to come!"

She drew her eagerly into the room.

"Take this chair by the stove. I hope the gas doesn't smell too terrible to you, coming in from the outside, but I can't seem to keep warm in this little north apartment! . . . Won't you have this pillow behind you? . . . Nobody ought to live in a north room, even if it is California. It's the sun that makes life worth while. . . . Oh, I'd love to have you take off your hat and let me make you a cup of tea! . . . Do excuse this disorder. I've been huddled on the couch all day, too cold and too—sort of blue—to pick things up much. . . . But it's so good to have somebody to talk to—and you, of all people! I had a feeling you'd come, but didn't dare hope it would be so soon!"

With a little laugh that induced a spell of coughing she seated herself on the couch again, tucking one slender foot under her.

"Excuse me," she begged, "but it's the only way I can keep it warm!"

And this, reflected Harriet in her first bafflement, was the girl she had expected to walk over at sight! As easily walk over a playing fountain!

Speechless alike from lack of opportunity and from the shattering of her preconceptions, she allowed herself to be made at home, though she refused to surrender any of her war-feathers. A certain foreboding told her that her impressiveness was going to need all the bolstering that her clothes could give it.

Allan's girl!—this slim, boyish person in blue middie and scarlet tie, with her unmistakable air of breeding under her youthful effervescence. Instead of a flippant golden-haired china-store doll, she looked like a member of a freshman basket-ball team. Her coloring was clear and even—a little flushed just now. Her hair, brown touched with auburn, was drawn back straight from a forehead which, if less beautifully smooth and white, could not have stood the test of such exposure. It was rolled into neat little coils at the edge of her slim throat and fluffed out relievingly over two small ears which might have been carved from pink coral. Her eyes and mouth seemed made for tender laughter, though she had undoubtedly been crying there on the couch.

With such grace as she could command. Harriet responded to the hectic conversational openings presented to her, at no time able to regain the initiative she had lost at the start. At last she saw Hazel Thorne's eyelids lower until the fringe of them lay like two tiny dark fans on either side of a straight small nose, while a deeper flush crept over her cheeks; then she looked up again, straight into Harriet's prominent, direct, all-observant black eyes.

"And now," she said shyly, "let's talk about—him—shall we?"

The irony of it! What else had Harriet come for?

"When did you get your last letter?" she asked.

"This morning"—shortly—had that desolating stroke really been so recent?

"Oh," breathlessly, "mine came this morning, too!"

That was all that was needed.

"He has told me so much about you—that is, written, you know," the girl's voice bubbled. "I just can't get over it's being so awfully good of you to come to see me so soon! . . . No, I scarcely knew him before he went away. I was the newest girl in the store. I had always kept house for my father before, but his sickness took all we had, and so I went to work there. I've al-

ways been crazy about beautiful porcelains, and I've done a little china painting myself. I was dreadfully lonesome, and I guess Mr. Stratton felt sorry for me, though he hardly ever spoke to me. But I used to think sometimes that—he liked me a little—by the way he looked at me, or rather, didn't look, except in that sort of quick, yet slow, way with the eyes—you know what I mean. The other girls were all wild about him, and said so. But I never did. They're a good-hearted bunch, and have gotten to be so kind to me. But Mr. Stratton was never—you know—familiar with anybody, though he was always pleasant and friendly."

Never familiar—Harriet knew that well. It was one of the points which had counted strongly for him in her decision. . . . Decision? . . . A wave of chagrin swept over her, biting like acid into her smooth self-complacency.

But Hazel's voice rippled on:

"Then, when word went around that he was going away, I tell you, it struck us all. He just laughed, and got us together and said he wanted every one of us to write to him and keep him from getting lonesome. He looked at all of them but me, and they sang out that of course they'd write. But afterward he looked straight at me and I knew, somehow, that he wanted me to write more than anybody. When his first letter came it was addressed to Miss White, in the cut glass, who has been in the store the longest. He said he was going to check us off as we answered, and if anybody didn't answer, he would know she would just as soon he never came back.

"Well, I couldn't keep from writing after that. I just thanked him for always being so kind to me, and told him how sort of forlorn the chinaware seemed since he was gone. He wrote nice, jolly notes to all the girls—we hadn't known he could be so jolly—and one to me to read aloud to them. But he put in another that was just for me. He told me he had wanted to know me better, but had let the conventionalities keep him from saying anything before

he left; but that now, looking at life in the light of the tough old civilization—the monotonous, nerve-wearing foreignness—in which he found himself—that's the way he said it—he wished he had been honest and told me some of the things he was longing—to say now!"

Her lips, sensitive and sweet as a child's, quivered. A peculiar pain contracted Harriet's heart—the first pang of suffering unmixed with selfish resentment that she had felt.

She thought of Allan's sensitive mouth, with its lips full enough for warmth and yet delicate enough to indicate truly the quality of his mind. In poignant fancy she saw them pressed upon the responsive lips of the girl before her, in the kiss of which he doubtless dreamed with maddening persistency, but for which he had been too fine to ask before he went away.

"Everything grew so sort of plain between us after that," the girl continued simply, in a confidence as far removed from indelicacy as cobweb is from twine. "It seemed as if we had always known each other. He told me how good you and your mother had been to him, and when he wrote me that your mother—had gone, it seemed almost like when I lost my father. He—loved you both. I wanted to know you, but"—she extended thin white fingers toward the anemic gas flame—"I was afraid of you, too. He admired you so much, I didn't see how he ever came to—care for me. Or how you could have him with you day after day and not care for him the way—I do."

Harriet shivered slightly and shrugged her fur a little closer. If there had been a shade of duplicity in this girl she could have fought her on her own ground and grimly crushed her. As it was, she was helpless before the utter candour which did not remotely suspect the truth.

"I've begun to study along all the lines he's taken up," the girl continued again. "It sort of—brings him nearer, somehow. I'm going to night school four nights a week, and reading up on Oriental history and on porcelains out-

side. In my art work I'm specializing in design, because—has he given you just a hint of what may be ahead?—he *may* be made resident buyer for the firm! He's learning Chinese with that in view, to make himself as valuable as possible to the company. So I'm going to study it, too, with a returned missionary I know—to be as valuable as possible—to him. . . .

"Then, I hear a good deal, off and on, at the store. Our sales manager says that Allan's job, as he has already put it through, has meant a huge scoop for the firm. You see, no other importers have done yet what he is doing—having those Oriental bronzes and potteries made along lines of pure, plain, simple beauty instead of in all those old grotesque dragon-shapes and the like that they have followed for centuries. It seems that the native artists over there can't get the idea for these Western designs from drawings, and so Allan had the firm send him trunk-loads of glass and earthenware models in European and American shapes for them to look at and handle. The first lot of samples he sent back here, when put on in our New York salesroom, brought orders from the trade all over the country. Even allowing for the duty, the foreign goods can be sold for less than bronzes and glazes in the same shapes manufactured here at home.

"Allan's terribly keen about the artistic side of it all, and has the pattern-makers do things over and over before the results make him willing to order production in quantity. And that's why he's making good for the firm on the commercial end of the experiment. My idea is that if they should have him go there to stay, and we both understood the processes, I might help him by working out new designs. Anyhow, everything I can do, even to hurting my mouth over Chinese prepositions—only, of course, they don't have prepositions—seems so worth while—because of the future. Of course, I do get pretty tired. I guess that's why I got sick, being overtired from the holiday rush at the store—and living in this cold

little north apartment; but it was the only one my chum and I could get near enough the school for my night work. She took such a cold she had to give up her position and go home. But I'm happy, just to feel I'm doing a little something—for him."

Again her tender eyes clouded and her mouth quivered.

Harriet gazed at her in a growing wonderment before which her bitterness had to give ground. *She* had not loved Allan like this. Love for her meant acquisition. For Hazel it meant service.

"When his letter this morning said he wasn't coming home soon it just seemed more than I could stand. I had been so buoyed up, expecting him. And I was so counting on stopping work at the store and just making a home for him, even if it had to be in—Kamchatka! . . . And so many times at night I think of how lonely he is, away over there among those queer-talking people, and of how lonely he was as a little orphan boy. . . . How I wish I could have—petted him!"

Her lovely eyebrows quirked at the inner corners, but she smiled the tears back.

"You can't guess how it helps to know you, now, and—to talk about him. Nobody knows we are engaged but my chum, and she never met him, for she worked in another place."

Her eyes grew brooding and mysterious. "It all seems so—wonderful to me!"

Again Harriet stirred in the warmth of her handsome furs. She had sat almost motionless since Hazel had begun to speak of Allan. Her intentions, ruthless, utterly self-centered, were withering like paper before the pure flame of this young girl's disinterested devotion. Again the steady tension of her ruling motive was suspended by a sense of futility, the stout ropes of her strong self-interest jarred from their pulleys.

And yet she struggled. Her business instinct impelled her toward some move calculated to save what she could from

the ruin. She suddenly knew that she cared for Allan—mostly—for his own sake; but her chief humiliation lay in the fact of her unfounded assumption of him as a lover. She had built a house on the sand, in the face of her vaunted knowledge of real-estate values. Moreover, that finer element which made her appreciate Allan's quality forced her to admit also the finer grain of this girl to whom his nature had gone out in high, instinctive yearning. Allan trusted her. Hazel trusted her. And she would have broken them both. Their continued confidence and affection would be sweet.

The loss of them—oh, she could not risk the loss! She must do something worthy of the woman they both believed her to be. Had she been hardening so fast with the years, the process hastened of late by the loss from her competent life of her dear, dependent mother?—hardening into an unlovely, spiritual form, even as those bronzes with which the habit-bound Oriental artists worked hardened into lines of unalterable ugliness? Then, perhaps this searing experience of disappointment—this withering of self-interest and burning up of vain self-complacency—was meant to melt her again, that her soul might be moulded in more beautiful contours. Somehow it must be so! . . . for already the loveliness of love had taken on a purer beauty to her inward eye.

Almost with surprise she found herself speaking unprepared-for words;

yet, as the full meaning of what she said sank into her consciousness, she knew she would not wish to recall a single syllable.

"Hazel," she said evenly, "there is just one wise thing for us to do. You must leave these cold rooms. My apartment is too big for one, but too comfortable for me to give up. We must be company for each other till—he—comes back. You can keep house for me and go on with your school work, too. Would you?"—her voice rang a little hesitantly—wistfully, even—in her own ears—"like to do that?"

Hazel's response was pitiful in its joyous amazement.

"Oh, Miss—Harriet! He told me how good! . . . It would be simply . . . And oh, when he comes back for me, a real home—to be married in!"

The shock of emotion broke a long-sealed chamber in the depths of Harriet Lemoyne's undemonstrative heart. Without knowing how it happened, she found herself returning Hazel's embrace and weeping.

She drew off quickly again, overwhelmed by a desire to be alone until she could readjust herself. She smoothed the abruptness of her farewell with arrangements to come the following day and help Hazel transfer her belongings. But after the door had closed between them she opened it again, hastily unpinned the purple violets at her breast and thrust them into the young girl's hands.

Violets were, after all, for sentiment.



IF there were more eligible men, women would probably hate one another a good deal less.



A Good Bargain

(A One-Act Play)

By Lord Dunsany

SCENE: *A Crypt of a Monastery. BROTHER GREGORIUS PEDRO is seated on a stone bench reading. Behind him is a window. Enter BROTHER LUCULLUS SEVERUS.*

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
Brother, we may doubt no longer.

GREGORIUS PEDRO
Well?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
It is certain. Certain.

GREGORIUS PEDRO
I too had thought so.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
It is clear now, clear as . . . It is certain.

GREGORIUS PEDRO
Well, why not? After all, why not?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
You mean . . . ?

GREGORIUS PEDRO
'Tis but a miracle.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
Yes, but . . .

GREGORIUS PEDRO
But you did not think to see one?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
No, no, not that; but Brother Antoninus . . .

GREGORIUS PEDRO
Well, why not he? He is holy as any, fasts as often as any, wears coarser clothing than most of us, and once

scourged a woman because she looked at our youngest—scourged her right willingly.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
Yes Brother Antoninus!

GREGORIUS PEDRO
Yet, why not?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
We knew him somehow. One does not know the blessed saints of heaven.

GREGORIUS PEDRO
No, no indeed. I never thought to see such a thing on earth; and now, and now . . . you say it is certain?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
Certain.

GREGORIUS PEDRO
Ah, well. It seemed like it, it seemed like it for some days. At first I thought I had looked too long through our eastern window, I thought it was the sun that had dazzled my eyes, and then, then it was clearly something else.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
It is certain now.

GREGORIUS PEDRO
Ah, well.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS
(*Sitting beside him, sighs.*) I grudge him nothing.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*A little heavily.*) No, nor I.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

You are sad, brother.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

No, not sad.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Ah, but I see it.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Ah, well.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

What grieves you, brother?

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*Sighs.*) We shall water the roses no more, he and I. We shall roll the lawns no more. We shall tend the young tulips together never again.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Oh, why not? Why not? There is not all that difference.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

There is.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

It is our cross, brother. We must bear it.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Ah, yes. Yes, yes. (*A bell rings noisily.*)

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

The gate bell, brother! Be of good cheer, it is the gate bell ringing!

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Why should I be of good cheer because the gate bell rings?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Why, brother, the world is at the gate. We shall see someone. It is an event. Someone will come and speak of the great world. Oh, be of good cheer, be of good cheer, brother.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

I think that I am heavy at heart to-day.

(*Enter JOHN SMOGGS.*)

SMOGGS

Ullo, Governor. Is either o' yer the chief monk?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

The Reverend Abbot is not here.

SMOGGS

'Ain't, ain't 'e?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

But what do you seek, friend?

SMOGGS

Want to know what you blokes are getting up to.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

We do not understand your angry zeal.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Tell us, friend.

SMOGGS

One o' yer is playing games no end, and we won't 'ave it.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Games?

SMOGGS

Well, miracles if you like it better, and we won't 'ave it, nor any of your 'igh church games nor devices.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

What does he say, brother?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Friend, you perplex us. We hoped you would speak to us of the great world, its gauds, its wickedness, its—

SMOGGS

We won't 'ave it. We won't 'ave none of it, that's all.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Tell us, friend, tell us what you mean.
Then we will do whatever you ask. And
then you shall speak to us of the world.

SMOGGS

There 'e is, there 'e is. The blighter.
There 'e is. 'E's coming. O Lord!...
(*He turns and runs. Exit.*)

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It's Antoninus!

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Why, yes, yes, of course!

GREGORIUS PEDRO

He must have seen him over the garden wall.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

We must hush it up.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Hush it up?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

There must be no scandal in the monastery.

(*Enter BROTHER ANTONINUS wearing a halo. He walks across and exits.*)

(*GREGORIUS is gazing with wide eyes.*)

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

There must be no scandal in the monastery.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It has grown indeed!

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Yes, it has grown since yesterday.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

I noticed it dimly just three days ago.
I noticed it dimly. But I did not—I
could not guess . . . I never dreamed
that it would come to this.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Yes, it has grown for three days.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It was just a dim light over his head,
but now . . . !

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

It flamed up last night.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

There is no mistaking it now.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

There must be no scandal.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

No scandal, brother?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Look how unusual it is. People will
talk. You heard what that man said.
They will all talk.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*Sadly.*) Ah, well.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

How could we face it.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It is, yes, yes—it is unusual.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Nothing like it has happened for
many centuries.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*Sadly.*) No, no. I suppose not. Poor
Antoninus.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Why could he not have waited?

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Waited? What? Three—three hundred years?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Or even five or ten. He is long past
sixty.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Yes, yes, it would have been better.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

You saw how ashamed he was.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Poor Antoninus. Yes, yes. Brother,
I think if we had not been here he would
have come and sat on this bench.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

I think he would. But he was ashamed to come, looking like that.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Brother, let us go. It is the hour at which he loves to come and sit here, and read in the little book of lesser devices. Let us go so that he may come here and be alone.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

As you will, brother; we must help him when we can. (*They rise and go.*)

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Poor Antoninus.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

(*Glancing.*) I think he will come back now.

(*Exeunt. The bare, sandaled foot of ANTONINUS appears as the last heel lifts in the other doorway. Enter ANTONINUS rather timidly. He goes to bench and sits. He sighs. He shakes his head to loosen the halo, but in vain. He sighs. Then he opens his book and reads in silence. Silence gives way to mumbles, mumbles to words.*)

ANTONINUS

... and finally beat down Satan under our feet. (*Enter SATAN.*) (*He has the horns and long hair and beard of a he-goat. His face and voice are such as could have been once in heaven.*)

ANTONINUS

(*Standing, lifting arm.*) In the name of ...

SATAN

Banish me not.

ANTONINUS

In the name ...

SATAN

Say nothing you may regret, until I have spoken.

ANTONINUS

In the ...

SATAN

Hear me.

ANTONINUS

Well?

SATAN

There fell with me from heaven a rare, rare spirit, the light of whose limbs far outshone dawn and evening.

ANTONINUS

Well?

SATAN

We dwell in darkness.

ANTONINUS

What is that to me?

SATAN

For that rare spirit I would have the gaud you wear, that emblem, that bright ornament. In return I offer you—

ANTONINUS

Begone—

SATAN

I offer you—

ANTONINUS

Begone.

SATAN

I offer you—Youth.

ANTONINUS

I will not traffic with you in damnation.

SATAN

I do not ask your soul, *only that shining gaud.*

ANTONINUS

Such things are not for hell.

SATAN

I offer you Youth.

ANTONINUS

I do not need it. Life is a penance and ordained as a tribulation. I have come through by striving. Why should I care to strive again?

SATAN

(Smiles.) Why?

ANTONINUS

Why should I?

SATAN

(Laughs, looking through window.)
It's spring, brother, is it not?

ANTONINUS

A time for meditation.

SATAN

(Laughs.) There are girls coming
over the hills, brother. Through the
green leaves and the May.(ANTONINUS draws his scourge from
his robe.)

ANTONINUS

Up! Let me scourge them from our
holy place.

SATAN

Wait, Brother, they are far off yet.
But you would not scourge them, you
would not scourge them, they are so . . .
Ah! one has torn her dress!

ANTONINUS

Ah, let me scourge her!

SATAN

No, no, Brother. See, I can see her
ankle through the rent. You would not
scourge her. Your great scourge would
break that little ankle.

ANTONINUS

I will have my scourge ready, if she
comes near our holy place.

SATAN

She is with her comrades. They are
Maying. Seven girls. (ANTONINUS
grips his scourge.) Her arms are full
of May.

ANTONINUS

Speak not of such things. Speak not,
I say. (SATAN is leaning leisurely
against the wall, smiling through the
window.)

SATAN

How the leaves are shining. Now she
is seated on the grass. They have gath-
ered small flowers, Antoninus, and put
them in her hair, a row of primroses.

ANTONINUS

(His eyes go for a moment on to far,
far places; unintentionally.) What
colour?

SATAN

Black.

ANTONINUS

No, no, no! I did not mean her hair.
No, no. I meant the flowers.

SATAN

Yellow, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

(Flurried.) Ah, of course, yes, yes.

SATAN

Sixteen and seventeen and fifteen, and
another of sixteen. All young girls. The
age for you, Antonius, if I make you
twenty. Just the age for you..

ANTONINUS

You, you cannot.

SATAN

All things are possible unto me except
salvation.

ANTONINUS

How?

SATAN

Give me your gaud. Then meet me at
any hour between star-shining and cock-
crow under the big cherry tree, when
the moon is waning.

ANTONINUS

Never.

SATAN

Ah, spring, spring. They are dancing.
Such nimble ankles.
(ANTONINUS raises his scourge.)

SATAN

(*More gravely.*) Think, Antoninus, forty or fifty more springs.

ANTONINUS

Never, never, never.

SATAN

And no more striving next time. See Antonius, see them as they dance, there with the May behind them under the hill.

ANTONINUS

Never! I will not look.

SATAN

Ah, look at them, Antoninus. Their sweet figures. And the warm wind blowing in spring.

ANTONINUS

Never! My scourge is for such.

(*SATAN sighs. The girls laugh from the hill. ANTONINUS hears the laughter. A look of fear comes over him.*)

ANTONINUS

Which . . . (*a little peal of girlish laughter off*). Which cherry tree did you speak of?

SATAN

This one over the window.

ANTONINUS

(*With an effort.*) It shall be held accursed. I will warn the brethren. It shall be cut down and hewn asunder and they shall burn it utterly.

SATAN

(*Rather sorrowfully.*) Ah, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

You shall not tempt a monk of our blessed order.

SATAN

They are coming this way, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

What! what!

SATAN

Have your scourge ready, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

Perhaps, perhaps they have not merited extreme chastisement.

SATAN

They have made a garland of May, a long white garland dropped from their little hands. Ah, if you were young, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

Tempt me not, Satan. I say, tempt me not!

(*The girls sing, SATAN smiles, the girls sing on. ANTONINUS tip-toes to seat, back to window, and sits listening. The girls sing on. They pass the window and shake the branch of a cherry tree. The petals fall in sheets past the window. The girls sing on and ANTONINUS sits listening.*)

ANTONINUS

(*Hand to forehead.*) My head aches. I think it is that song . . . Perhaps, perhaps it is the halo. Too heavy, too heavy for us. (*SATAN walks gently up and removes it and walks away with the gold disc. ANTONINUS sits silent.*)

SATAN

When the moon is waning. (*Exits.*) (*More petals fall past the window. The song rings on. ANTONINUS sits quite still, on his face a new ecstasy.*)

CURTAIN



Summer Thunder

By Stephen Vincent Benét

I

THE nature of Justice is a thing that has always interested me. I have had more time than most to consider it, perhaps, for I have been a cripple as long as I can remember, and the best the specialists have been able to do for me is to cushion more comfortably my rolling-chair or show the nurse an easier way of lifting me to it from my bed and back again. But reading and the sparkle of thought in the mind, the twisting search of the diver for Truth in the ink-pool of Experience, the dead-leaf quietude of the spirit in the ceaseless millrace of Contemplation—these have been mine illimitably.

Also the sight from each window of this house of the ragged Maine landscape, bitter and starving, where the bones of the rock push through the earth from uneasy spring to thick long winter, white as a bear. Every window alters the picture a little, like various men discussing one woman, but the lines and the strength and the harshness—they are the same forever and ever. I know them by heart like a ballad now, yet like a ballad there is now and then some word of the ground, some feature of the forest of whose meaning I can never be entirely sure. And any pine or hillock can summon generations of shadows and memories to the roll of a phantom drum.

That straggling circle of stones up the slope of the hill, for instance, beside the black tree that looks like a broken Y. There aren't many besides myself who would think of it as a court of Justice—of that Justice we are all of us seeking, I tell you. But I saw a true cause tried there with every circumstance of

argument, until judgment was fully given. Not exactly in accordance with our notions of law, perhaps, but the verdict has never been appealed. And it is more than six years this summer since Rafe Batchelder and Lucius Hewitt went up there to plead their cases.

These little stagnant counties of north Maine—they're like a pool that has been dammed too long. Clear on the surface, possibly—looking as easy to read and understand as a sentence set up in capitals—but just stir up the bottom with a stick once or twice and see what comes floating to the surface! The people are inbred, curious; the headstrong, the lively, the heedless moved away from here twenty years ago. You have only to look around you to find as many queer, suppressed, lopsided characters as there are knots in a bad piece of wood. They still seem to have that lean, hard stamina—it's the best thing the Pilgrims gave them, and it dies almost as hard as it lived—but even that is wearing thin in places. Especially over the nerves. Coffee and pie and the frying-pan—the weather and the rocks under the plough—they've forced your native pure-stock American who hadn't the courage to go West right up to the borderline between just "queerness" and insanity, until sometimes he quite forgets and steps over it completely. There are stories in old yellow newspapers and the stilted style of the eighties that make the ways of the House of Atreus seem commonplace. And for myself, I have seen what I have seen.

Rafe Batchelder was a strong man with something wrong in him. It's like looking at a big elm with rot inside it: you may not be sure what the matter

is at first, but you are very sure the thing is bound to fall. He had a kind of fair, collie-like good looks—though he was fat for them. But if you ever took hold of his arm or shook hands with him you knew there was iron under the fat.

He was twenty-five or so at the time this happened—quite a prosperous fellow. Brought up on his father's farm here, good with a boat, he had worked at one of the big summer resorts for three years after his father died. The last two winters a New York broker who took a fancy to him had shipped him down to Florida to run his cruising launch. But there had been some trouble or other and now Rafe was back on the farm. Industrious—saved quite a bit of money—had had an offer from one summer resort already (this was March and he had only been back since January)—but he said he was through with working for other people, that he wanted to rest and work for himself. Though what rest he could find in Maine farming—but that wasn't for me to say. At any rate, there he was—you can see some of his fields from the window.

Lucius Hewitt was another kind of flesh entirely, a dark, slight, pleasant little chap. His father had been the village storekeeper and killed himself with patent medicines. So Lucius had hired out to the Batchelders—the old crow of a mother and a slip-shoe niece ran the farm while Rafe was away—and kept his mother and his girl first cousin alive on less than a pine can wring from stones. But the whole Hewitt cottage was as clean and bare as a plate, and the neighbours used to help, as Maine does, with a free hand and a salty tongue.

Everallen Strong, the girl cousin, would wash dishes or help cook in haying time, and they paid her what they could, which wasn't much. Everallen was a singular being. I have never seen anybody who gave quite the same impression of having strayed into the world from a dream.

It was not that she was beautiful, exactly, though I think I have seen her

as beautiful as it is permitted a human thing to be; it was that she was separate, that she seemed to have no more connection with the every-day affairs of life than a cloud might have with the turbulence of a city or a crocus with the machinery of a train. Rafe Batchelder, on occasion, convinced you of the existence of positive evil; Everallen made you waver into the belief of a middle world, a world of phantasmagoria, a shadowy borderland of consciousness filled with good elves and nursery tales. She was uniquely alone. I have never beheld another creature like her.

I use the word "creature" advisedly—she seemed as happy in her loneliness, as much apart from crude mankind as wind. She was olive-dusky, slim as a young apple tree. Her eyes were the most distant and yet warmly untroubled things in the world. She was quite nineteen, and Lucius was her friend and counselor by virtue of three more years. To the casual they seemed much the same age. At least Rafe called Lucius "that boy" once when, returning from Florida, he found him working on the Batchelder farm, and, seeing it stung a trifle, took curious pains to do so again.

It had been a set winter and a slow spring, and the pain that comes down on me like a hand now and then had been ungenerously frequent in calling. So, until the ice of the year broke up in a great sluicing thaw at the middle of April, I could only get news by hearsay of the hangman's knot in which these three lives I have talked about were already so crookedly tangled. But Mrs. Ventor, my housekeeper-nurse, would drop me little flakes of gossip now and then through lips pursed up in virtue. The Hewitts had always been friends of hers, and Rafe Batchelder she hated healthily.

"He ain't right," she would throw at me. "He ain't right!"—and then stop when I tried to question her. But one day she went farther. "Ever since that business with the dog—" she deigned to add as a footnote.

By degrees I got the story out of her. It was a common enough tale, God

knows, a stray cur, a half-grown lout, a dirty little piece of cruelty done with the causeless ferocity of the stupid. But the way she told it chilled me a little. She ended, her voice drooping into horror.

"And they found the little dog with his throat tore up, in that bunch of trees on the hill there. And they say Rafe did it with—"

But that I dismissed as improbable, as well as certain curious, formless hints at what seemed to taste of ritual sacrifice.

It is true superstition fades slowly from the pastures, and even the scientific farmer says a few words unconsciously now and then that were once propitiation against terror, and goes through certain acts, he knows not why, which, if rooted back to their beginnings, will be found to resemble astonishingly acts of homage to elemental powers, strong and invisible. And Rafe was a reversion to type—and an older type than the Pilgrims.

But I had read fairly widely in folklore in my time, and a circumstance of the kind so doubtfully pointed at occurring under twentieth-century eyes seemed to strain and overpower credulity. So I put the matter out of my mind entirely, with my reasonless dislike of Rafe made a little more reasonable, that was all. It wasn't till I saw him with Everallen that I thought of Mrs. Ventor's hints again.

II

It was a day in high April, wet and steamy, with the earth a soaking brown under the slush. My chair was wheeled up here to the window. I could see the fence and the path and the slope with the stones beyond.

Everallen came up this way from the Batchelders' with one of those splint-baskets on her arm. She had been doing some work there, I suppose. Her walk was like a grave dance of thistle-down; it was plain that she belonged to the Spring. Again in her motions, in the singing toss of her head, I caught

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the character of something unearthly. She was as happy as a young wave under a cloudless sky—but when Rafe came squelching through the stubble there and crossed over to meet her at the pasture-bars, she sank back into vague earthiness at once; it was as if someone had blown out a flame in her.

She tried to slip by him with a word, but he stopped her. They were both of them utterly unconscious of me—people have got used by this time to thinking of me as just a blank of face at a window, a blank that smiles if you nod to it. But I happen to have practised a little lip-reading for diversion now and then, so I knew more of them than they thought. Though at first I followed their talking unconsciously.

"Wait a mint!" said Rafe. "Where you going?"

"Home." She jerked her head defensively.

"Wait, then. You and me's to have a talk."

Like Apollyon he straddled all across the way.

With an indescribable gesture that made you think of a tired bird, she dropped the basket, clasped her hands on the fence-rail.

"Well?" she said, without turning her head toward him.

He said something I couldn't catch, but her answer was obviously "No."

There followed a rapid interchange of short phrases where I caught only broken words: "Night—the whiny son of a fool—up by the Circle."

Then he turned and said something so slowly and carefully that I received the full impact of the abominable sentence. I hurt my nails on the chair arm. It was as brutal and deliberate as a thrown clod. Along the splintered rail of the fence his hand crept toward hers like a snail, and, like a snail, it was wet and glistening.

She seemed horribly unsure for a moment, weak, shaken, as if the monstrous words were earth crushing down on her. Then all her eeriness came about her like magic.

"No!" she said; and I have never

seen such contempt on lips again. She would only waste that much clean speech on him.

And she was walking, not running, walking slowly away from him with his face like the mask of an Indian devil. And she was past the window and round the corner and, for a heart-stopping instant, I thought he would follow. But he just stood and bellowed after her with the anger like dirty scarlet in his voice.

"It'll be yes some day, Everallen! It'll be yes some day, you—" and he ran off suddenly into filth and stopped and stood switching his boot with a twig and glaring, till finally he marched off toward his stable. I was sorry for his horses when I thought of them. Then I sank back slowly in my chair again, and I think I must have fainted for a time. At least what I next remember is Mrs. Vantor bending over me.

I wondered just what I could do. North Maine is not like a city—any charges I could bring—who would believe them? And to whom could I present what evidence there was?

Two days later, when that bearded caricature, the town sheriff, dropped in to talk to me interminably, I hinted to him what I had heard. He was not surprised—that was clear—but we both of us knew the country and the people and he wouldn't take it seriously at all—said Rafe was a loose-mouthed bully, but he'd stopped annoying the girl now and she was keeping out of his way. If he heard any more about it he would take steps, of course—and so on.

Meanwhile, he thought Lucius Hewitt was the best man to stand up to Rafe. I was unconvinced, but didn't say so—I couldn't blame him—he hadn't seen Rafe's face. But, after the manner of mortals, I dreamed and let the matter drift. And for more than a month nothing happened, and I began to think the sheriff must be right.

III

THE third factor, and X of the equation, Lucius Hewitt, did not happen to

come within range of my windows till late in May. You have no idea what a curious effect my viewing the story by little snatches of scenes with long gaps between, filled in by the muddily loquacity of Mrs. Vantor, produced. It was like seeing disconnected flashes of a moving picture, lacking titles or explanations, with only naked intuition to set circumstances in their proper relation to each other. But this much I was able to gather in the intervening seven weeks or so.

Rafe was badgering Hewitt intensively. There was a series of petty persecutions. You may have seen a mischievous child prick and plague a perfectly well-disposed and quiet cat till the animal spits and shows claws. It was not a matter of actual physical bullying; Rafe rose over Lucius like a mountain, he could have broken him between his hands. It was more a constant worrying and nagging designed to drive the infuriated gentle man against the stolid violent one—to the former's inevitable destruction. There were stories of meals at the Batchelders that must have salted every mouthful Lucius ate. Rafe hung over him like a weight—he carried Rafe around with him, so to speak, wherever he went, a visible and bowing oppression. And now Rafe had begun to linger by the road in the short twilight and stare at Everallen as she passed.

You may ask, why didn't Lucius go away; take Everallen away?

I think he was making up his mind to it—but this was in the days before Sara-jevo—he had no money—his mother was old—where could they go? And people here are more anchored—it's like tearing a plant out of a wall to move them—unless they are unusual people.

Lucius was not at all unusual—a nice lad with the pith of a man in him—that was all. Why didn't he try to marry Everallen, then—for it was obvious by this time that he loved her? It is my idea that he was still in the first stage of love—not yet accustomed to that shock of splendour and awe that comes (and not more than once in the

years) when a playmate and companion as known and friendly as bread becomes suddenly something like a burning cloud to gaze upon, and most desirable of all imagined things.

The impact of first love on a soul that has had no tutors is like the first sight of a moonrise over the ocean; it leaves no room for the pure greed of possession. And my eavesdropping on Lucius Hewitt one night showed me that this particular assumption seemed, in its essentials, fairly correct.

He was talking to Mrs. Vantor in the kitchen. I sat reading over there by the lamp. The year had changed—it was one of May's beamy evenings. The door between the rooms was quarter-open for warmth and the companionship of human sound. The first word that came between me and my book was Mrs. Vantor's.

"Why can't you just pick up and leave then, Loosh?" in a tone of stiff concern.

I peeped over the edge of the page. His shadow was all I could see of him. It was bent over like a man in pain.

There was a long mutter of explanation from the shadow.

"Well, I'd kill him!" Her voice rose sharply. I could hear the whack of her hand on the bread-board.

The reply came strangely, a desolate whisper.

"Kill him? Sometimes I think I must. Sometimes I think I must."

The calm acceptance of the words evidently shocked her, gave her pause. She resumed less decidedly, in part-satire.

"I'd kill him. They'd never hang you for it, not in this town."

"They'd send me to prison for life, though." The crushed certainty of the words was absolute.

"Then marry Everallen, you dough of a man! Marry Everallen and you can put the law on Rafe if he waits for her and talks to her like you say."

"Marry Everallen? As if it was like I could! As if she'd marry with a thing like me." The shadow wrenched at its fingers.

"Lord, Lord, listen to the boy! As if any man in the world wasn't good

enough for a girl Everallen's age! Now if it was a tall, ripe woman like me, Loosh! . . ." She burst into a cawing laugh.

Hewitt was obviously perturbed.

"Mrs. Vantor—Mrs. Vantor—I didn't—I mean—"

It lent fuel to her creaking mirth. He shrugged his shoulders in a way that seemed foreign, unnatural to him, then went on desperately:

"Besides, Mrs. Vantor, I'm not like her. She's of the woods, she's like the woods. She's like those trees up there—she's strange when you talk to her. And Rafe, he's like that, too, sometimes, and I'm afraid, Mrs. Vantor, I'm afraid. . . ."

Her laugh was shut off like water. He ended on that same blank calmness.

"But I think you're right, Mrs. Vantor. I'll marry her, I'll try to marry her. Marry her and go away, God knows how, after the haying's over. Because, if I don't, I'll kill him or he'll kill me—somehow."

He rose with the tiredness of a man gone old.

"Thanks for the baking powder," he said briefly, and the shadow vanished.

There was more low talking at the back door, but in voices I couldn't catch.

The shadow of Lucius and the quiet words coming from the shadow had impressed me more than any substance could. And his sentence about the likeness between Rafe and Everallen wore a colour of predestined fatality that I trembled at but could not deny. They were atavisms, elementals, both of them—a mere glance showed it clearly. And the play of the driad and the satyr—to behold which is horror for the human—is as old and as reasonless as death. It was by her very elvish remoteness from the world that Everallen might suddenly be betrayed. Yet if only Lucius Hewitt had courage—and once more I went impotently round the useless circle of thought. Till at last the whole cause seemed a vast delusion, and I opened my book again and started reading.

IV

THERE followed a backwater of some two months, during which, to the surface observer at least, nothing more of any consequence occurred. Then events moved on to their conclusion with the disorderly swiftness of a dream.

Through the two months I considered the case more often than I liked, for, as I say, I was then, as now, examining into the nature of Justice. And there seemed no justice here at all—only the shadow of a man and the sprite of a girl bound fast under a falling sword. And no way of escape was to be seen that did not magnify the tragedy. Doubtless I thought of it strainedly enough—it would not have appeared so hopelessly wrong to the village wisecracks for Everallen to marry Rafe. For it seems that was possible, too, by the gossip Mrs. Ventor brought me. But I could only think of the Black Mass.

It was a sultry night of dying July. Mrs. Ventor had just fetched my coffee.

"Quite a piece of news that's going around the village!" she said hesitantly.

"Yes? What?"

"Loosh Hewitt and that Everallen cousin of his. They're going to get married."

I felt the most inexpressible relief. For weeks I had carried that unjust tangle of lives in my breast as a man bears a secret and mortal disease. And now everything was to be solved and saved in the simplest manner possible!

"He's got a job down Portland way. They're going there the start of September."

My thoughts of what might have happened seemed remembrances of nightmare. The thick, soft air of the evening was as sweet to me as the first touch of driven spray on the lips of a man convalescent from fever. I smiled in the abundance of my content.

"Thank you. I'm glad to know."

Mrs. Ventor was ready to say more, but I wanted to be alone with my reprieve.

I have seldom been so happy as when, in my chair next morning, I tasted over

and over again the knowledge of the previous night. Mrs. Ventor had wheeled me to this window. I could sit and look at the long, complacent slope of that hill for hours on hours and be sure no cloud would fall upon it, I thought. No cloud of human will or passion, that is—there were other clouds enough in the hot heavens. The sultriness had only increased with night—and the sky was huddled with cumuli and oppressive—a foretaste of rain was in the air. And the certain coming of the thunderstorm, already brewing far up in the hills, symbolized to me the final breaking of Fate's grip on the men and woman whose entanglement had fascinated me so long.

I glanced up at the circle of stones, a scytheman approached them, mowing. He straightened a moment to wipe the sweat from his face. The diminished and shadowy gesture seemed indefinitely familiar. Then I knew him. It was Lucius Hewitt. I wondered how Rafe had taken the news.

Then, as I considered him idly, the man himself passed under the window. The puffy face of a powerful beast looked up at me, smiled. A hand waved. I was surprised into a nod. Why Rafe Batchelder should think me worth a "Good morning!"—but, perhaps he, too, had altered, "seen the light," I thought with a vague reminiscence of tracts. What I could not understand at all was the triumph in his face—a triumph so obvious as to be insolent. It came like a chill upon my idling—but the sunlight was too rare to be so wasted, and my mind slipped back to sunny quiet.

Rafe also carried a scythe. He stopped near the bottom of the hill, spat on his hands, began to mow. The sky grew darker above a fretting wind. The storm would break in half an hour.

After a time it struck me that there was something strange in the way Rafe was mowing. I remembered all the evil I had seen in his face.

Then I saw. Hewitt mowed across the slope of the hill and a little down. Rafe was mowing straight up the slope,

the clean path of an arrow. They would meet at the circle of stones.

I glanced around the room desperately. Mrs. Ventor was out; she would not be back for an hour. Both men were good mowers. Within twenty minutes their swathes would cross.

I had always thought it impossible to pray before. For myself I had found it so. But within those twenty minutes I prayed for the cause of Everallen with the strength of unceasing despair. Whether I was heard or not is a thing that you must judge.

Not once did I see the men look at each other as their scythes crept nearer and nearer. There can't have been any sound at all but the soft hiss of the scythes through grass and the sigh of the gathering storm.

Rafe was first at the stones by five yards, and waited. Once he looked down the valley toward this house, shading his eyes—to make sure perhaps that my face was there, a smudge of white against the window, the witness for his acquittal should he need one.

The cloud over the sky was complete. Its center, bearing the tempest, hung astonishingly black above the hill. The dust of the path was splattered with a first few heavy drops of rain. Lucius finished mowing, straightened. He walked slowly toward Rafe, his scythe held clumsily in front of him. It is then that Rafe must have spoken.

I can imagine what things he must have said—and that Everallen's name was one of them. For the bonds that Lucius had put on himself for the last six months broke like strings, and he was crying like a madman and charging at Rafe with a wild, loose hacking of his scythe. Rafe shifted flashingly, dodged the rush as easily as a boxer jerks away from a fist. Lucius plunged past, recovered, almost slipped. Then Rafe came at him, half-dancing, with the ugly agility of a crane, the scythe held poised and quivering like a lunging beak of steel. Lucius gave ground continually. He dared not look to save his footing. He was crowded back between two stones.

Rafe shuttled before him, closed in. It seemed like a figure in a country dance—it was all as unreal as that. Then, with the fury of the desperate, Lucius leaped aside as Rafe swooped and struck. The blade clawed the air and missed, but the staff came full upon Lucius's head. I could hear the *thwack!* in my mind and wondered dully why it didn't reach my ears. Lucius stiffened in his stride for an instant like a man made out of wood. Then he reeled against a stone, hung twitching there, and fell face downward to the ground.

There was no sign from any quarter of the earth, now Cain had killed in self-defense. Rafe looked at the crumple an instant and saw that it did not move. He ran a dozen paces from the stones and stood there waving his arms like an unclean giant of victory.

Thunder slashed across the sky like a ripping cloth, and the rain fell drummingly faster on the yelling lips of his conquest. I saw him sickly and in agony. I saw him skip as he walked, and laugh and shake his long scythe like a metal toy—and then something fierce and thin and incredibly shining reached down out of heaven and struck him.

V

THE rest of it is as simple as flowing water.

They found Lucius there some half an hour after, when he had begun to stir weakly and try to rise. He had no recollection of the struggle, and the char that lightning had made of Rafe they buried as decently as was possible.

Lucius had fever for a month, but Everallen nursed him. They are living down in Portland now—Lucius got a very good job with a shipping concern after his discharge from the army. Two children, a frame house in the suburbs.

It seems strange that people change so much. Lucius is settled, successful—I could tell that the last time I saw them. The village here has never quite forgiven them for daring to go away and be happy—wonders why they so seldom come back. Everallen lost some

of her unearthliness with motherhood—but the little girl is an elf from the forest. It gave me a shock when I saw her, the whole tangled play came back so piercingly. They are safe, building safety out of the years, having passed through more torment than most.

And I stay here with my books; and the book that I shall write about Jus-

tice. It will be a novel book, that book. For some men think of Justice as Force, causeless Force that drills the chaos of the universe. And to most she is the blind goddess with the balances. But forever now and until I am destroyed, since that hour I sat watching at the window, I have thought of her as thunder—always thunder—summer thunder walking tall between the hills.



Lovers' Lane

By Thomas Moulton

THIS cool quiet of trees
 In the grey dusk of the north,
 In the green half-dusk of the west,
 Where fires still glow;
 These glimmering fantasies
 Of foliage branching forth
 And drooping into rest;
 Ye lovers, know
 That in your wanderings
 Beneath this arching brake
 Ye must attune your love
 To hushed words.
 For here is the dreaming wisdom of
 The unmovable things . . .
 And more:—walk softly, lest ye wake
 A thousand sleeping birds.



WHEN a woman begins to doubt her husband could kiss any woman he looks at, it is a sign that she is being cured of love.



IT begins with a prince kissing an angel. It ends with a bald-headed man looking across the table at a fat woman.

The Big Frog

By Orrick Johns

DALE TREMONT is a legend. To the greater number of those who know the name, now that the man himself is no more, his memory stands for every human attribute that invites contumely. And even for me, who managed in a measure to follow the dark ways of his brain, it is practically impossible to present him in a sympathetic light. Tremont himself must have realized this. He must have known that the portrait of himself etched by the acid of his acts did not lend itself to any friendly attempt at amendment. For in his bed in that gray New York hospital, he said:

"Whatever you do, don't try to explain me. They'll only think it another pose, or that I've come back from the other world to laugh at them. No . . . there's no explaining me any more than you can tell why an old trainer will hamstring his own horse."

Nevertheless, I have set myself the job of telling, in so far as I know how, the real story of the strange fellow's end. I have two strong reasons for doing so.

First, his peculiar delusion is the sort that has a fascination for many in these days of weird philosophies and wild creeds. But the other reason is a better one; it is that I personally have known of a half a dozen acts of positively Quixotic generosity, performed by Tremont at different times in his ill-fated life, and without the faintest hope of reward or even acknowledgment. That sort of thing is rare. It is my excuse for writing his history.

It has been nearly a decade since that bulky form twisted upon the hos-

pital bed and sank into the first real rest I believe it had had for years. Ever since then I have been intending to begin the story. It remained for young Holloway Holmes, the architect, a few nights ago, as we were driving down the Avenue, to point out for me the exquisite illuminated turret of the Bush Terminal Building through the cleft of Forty-second street, and bring back in a flood the recollection of that mad night of Tremont's when he looked from just such a height into the eyes of a great city, and saw for the first time his own distorted image in its true light.

II

My earliest recollection of Tremont was the year he was thirty-six, a delightful age for such a man as he. Rich, witty, of assured social position, physically in perfect trim, good-looking, bouncing, well-groomed, and really in demand for himself and himself alone, at every affair. He was a little vain, I remember, especially of the attentions of women; but wherever he was to be found, in Paris, or at Hot Springs or the races, in New York or in Florida, Tremont was a sight to stimulate the pulses. He was always ready for play, always the amusing cynic-sentimentalist.

I say always amusing, but it often seemed to me that Tremont was least of all so at home. Of course at home he was tied down somewhat to his prosperous business, but I do not refer to that drawback. The fact is, there was a snappish, belligerent streak in his na-

ture, an arrogance which asserted itself there, and was hardly apparent elsewhere. Had Tremont at this time, in his golden age, broadened himself by migrating to Europe or the East, I like to think he might never have become submerged in the bitter warfare that darkened his charming promise.

At home, in the middle Southern part of the country, he had no outlet for the intellectual hand-springs he delighted to practice. The men who inhabited his clubs were of a more sour confection. With very little to make them pleasing, except a smattering of sports, they were absorbed by the fluctuations of the market, or sat about for days unappetizingly smacking their lips over the latest financial failure in town or the newest social scandal. Beyond the range of home gossip their imaginations rarely ventured. And they hated Tremont as such men do gradually come to hate a humorous gadfly, even of their own sort. They squirmed under his half-comprehensible flings of wit, his dubious paradoxes, his careless disdain of their success—even of his own success, won, it is true, as easily as though he had done it with his left hand.

However, at this period, not Tremont's bitterest enemy would have predicted anything for him but an expanding and brilliant career. Some people whispered that all was not as fair as seeming, that he was heavily mortgaged, that he had managers who robbed him. But then they recollected his astuteness and foresight in past deals, and knew that he was no fool. It would take more than a crooked lieutenant or two to hurt his rating.

Others said that a man who loafed as much as he did could not be exactly on the square. What was this business of philandering in the country on horseback during the mornings, of being the only man present at afternoon teas? And that he drank too much was certain—it was ruining his figure.

If Tremont knew of all this talk it did not disturb him, though it may have

flattered him. He went about his usual leisurely round of affairs, perhaps a trifle too self-conscious of his special rôle, the philosopher of little reading and no very profound feeling.

Then suddenly the whip descended.

I was away at the time, working on my lectures for the next year. I heard the news as one so often hears an ominous rumour about any prominent figure—from the lips of a woman. It was at a delightful retreat in Carolina.

Dale Tremont had been expelled from the Wilhampton Club. That was all. Surely I knew more about it—and wouldn't I tell her? She had only met Mr. Tremont once, and thought him such a charming man.

To understand what it meant would be to have in one's bones the atmosphere of the aristocratic, backward inland city of a certain size, to possess at one's fingers' ends knowledge of its intrigues, its family histories, its devious sources of authority. And understanding what it meant—what it meant to Dale Tremont especially—I simply gasped at the possibilities.

The thing seemed hardly believable. It certainly seemed impossible to survive, if true; yet, there it was, the stark fact, confirmed daily by other lips than those of my pretty informant. Expulsion from Wilhampton!

If Tremont had committed suicide, if he had gone to the penitentiary for some black crime, there would have been a soothing finality about his fate. But this expulsion, this indeterminate, vague, horrible sentence of social semi-consciousness was something so much more unrelieved, so much more damaging, really. Then there came to me the familiar, blithe thought, that it was Tremont. If anybody could wriggle out of the mess and right himself it would be he. All the force of tradition, of sentiment and of the women, would be on his side.

With this reflection I dropped the matter. By the time I got back to the city the Wilhampton affair would be adjusted, and Tremont would be pursuing his urbane way.

III

I HAD as a rule a great many things to do on my irregular visits home in those days, and I heard little about Dale Tremont until I began to breathe freely and get around. Then one afternoon I dropped in on Mathilde Bennett.

She was the nearest thing to a live wire in sight, and I enjoyed hearing her mix up her Anatole France and her Shaw, her Wells and her Hardy as she always did quite deliberately. Her spacious reading table was usually covered with the latest offspring of these literary fountains, sent in bunches from a New York book store. She painted, too, and should not have lacked some inspiration in the fine Rembrandt, the suave Hoppner, and the pair of Monets, not to mention lesser glories, which, each with its individual little cylinder shade above it, combined to shed a warm glow—upon her comfortable drawing room. We presently got into the vein of scandal.

"Personally," said Mathilde, "I always liked Dale well enough, but I wasn't one of the ravers. Of course, I am a perfectly respectable mother of three children with a husband who reads the Second Inaugural before going to bed and weeps over it. You know Morty actually does. And Dale really made me nervous. But Althea Gray was indignant about the affair. Maybe they didn't have good reason to expel him—it certainly seems a serious thing to do to anybody, as she says—but Dale made outrageous remarks about people. The mere fact that he said them to get a laugh doesn't help the people he said them about. However, nobody knows a *thing* except the Board of Directors; and that puts it in the very worst light, of course. You know you can think anything."

"Do you mean to say they have not preferred charges openly?"

"That's what he raised such a row over. Simply acted like a madman. Demanded an exposé. Challenged everybody to a duel. Got all sorts of things published about himself in the news-

papers. You should have seen them—it was perfectly absurd."

"Laughing in his sleeve?" I faintly suggested; for even with the prestige and glory of the Wilhampton at stake, it did sound impossible for Tremont to play the hysterical.

"Not laughing at all! Really on the rampage. And the next thing he did was to get out of business, leave his famous apartment, and open that old house of his grandfather's on North Street. You know where it is; awful neighbourhood, a thousand years old and gone to seed. He's moved everything there and told the newspapers he was through with our ill-bred civilization, and was going to rehabilitate the old era of simple manners, noble manhood, and honest artistocracy, and all that sort of thing." Some Tremont or other has always taken himself seriously. It was his uncle when I was a girl."

I remembered the old Tremont house—a curious stone relic of square towers, rusty iron-work balconies, and broad verandahs, set in the midst of a small plot of sparse grass badly discouraged by a quarter of a century's fight against the annual tons of coal dust which settled upon it.

The building was alone of its kind in the midst of a double row of cheap and ugly lodging houses, with their upper stories and basements let out to small factories, laundries, barber-shops and the like. It must have been a task refurbishing it for decent occupation, and yet I imagined an interior of tall mirrors and old wood and high ceilings which might not be unattractive. At any rate this last move of the declassé Dale stirred me so that I forgot his exhibitions of poor sportsmanship as Mathilde related them to me.

"I suppose, then, I could find him there?" I asked.

"Oh, of course, *you* would look him up."

"Of course," I laughed. "I was born in this town quite a few years ago, and Dale Tremont's *débâcle* is the only romantic thing that has happened to it

since. Honestly, Mathilde, how do you manage to stick it out? I heard the other day that the old River Hotel is giving up the ghost. No patronage. Nobody out after six o'clock. Think of it—the River, with all its history, one of the show places of the continent even in my day. It's a shame. You drive away everything that is likely to keep you from your peaceful community sleep. And poor Dale Tremont, just because he is amusing, goes down before your virtuous wrath."

"You're perfectly right," she replied, as she gave me her hand. "Don't know I'm alive half of the time. That's why you've got to see that I have a jazz of a time when Althea and I come on to New York in October."

I went to the Tremont house on North Street. It was locked and barred. The next day I heard more of the details of Tremont's offense, and I could understand why he had found it more comfortable to go to the Azores or Brazil, or some such place to get over the biggest surprise in his life.

His offense had been decidedly worse than being amusing. He had actually brought as his guest to a Willhampton dinner-dance, a woman whose name had been a by-word in the town for nearly a generation. It was the most preposterous piece of braggadocio I have ever heard of, and the general feeling was that he deserved what he got. I hoped he would never come back, but I felt too sure that he would. It was evident from his first outburst after the expulsion, that Dale had all of the stubbornness for which his family had been noted, and added to that, I knew, enough vanity not to wish to be forgotten by his enemies.

My fear that he would return was quickly confirmed. A month later I ran into him in New York, in the bar of the Knickerbocker. He was just off the boat from Havana and was talking vociferously with a chap I dimly remembered in my college days. We were left alone for a few minutes—I was already late for a theater party—

and I was glad literally not to have the time to open up the subject of the Willhampton. It is a melancholy job condoling with the victim of one of those acts of social justice from which there is no court of appeals.

But Tremont's whole story was insistently apparent in his looks. His defiance, his lack of ease, his tendency to raise his voice and to make all his statements a good deal more forcible than was necessary revealed the depths of his wound.

"Not going back?" I asked.

The remark was perilously close to the subject I wished to avoid, but Tremont did not take my cue.

"Sure, I'm going back," he replied with spirit. "I'm going to open that old house and *live*, by George! Out of business, out of everything—I've longed for this for years. Come on when you can, and we'll have some parties that will be worth remembering—like old times."

I decided mentally that I wouldn't. Indeed, I rushed off to the theater carrying away, on the whole, an evil impression of him. He looked fat and soft, and red as a beef. No doubt South America had been one long spree. He looked a little funny in fact. It was a pity. Could a chap as promising as Tremont had been, be finished? Yes, I felt sorry for him. The kind of fiber to turn the thing into an asset was lacking, it seemed.

"Damn it," I thought. "I wonder if he is really innocent? I wonder if those imbeciles have done him up just for meanness. He doesn't talk like a man who is ashamed of himself. But there's a look in his eyes. . . ."

There had been a hungry, fighting look in his eyes; it had made me a little sorry for my indifferent attitude. . . .

"Oh, deuce take him," I finished.

And the sight of a jolly box-party and a rising curtain (is there any more gorgeous moment in life?) soon drove out of my mind the Tremonts and all other matters that were not at least as inconsequential as the girl's silk cloak

thrown over the back of the chair in front of me.

"Milord," said the usual Butler . . . and so forth. I settled down to enjoy myself.

"Why in the devil will people be serious?" I thought.

IV

My ties at home had grown more and more tenuous, and my trips less frequent. I heard of Tremont from time to time, and the news that I received of him was such as to make me renew my wish to keep out of his way. Apparently the streak of peculiarity I had noticed in him on our brief New York meeting had widened and deepened into something quite out of bounds.

My information was scanty but sufficiently indicative. He had set himself up in his old house as a modern Diogenes, and had cultivated associations with all sorts of shady people, radical thinkers, ladies no better than they should be and a handful of cantankerous youngsters who were not learning anything from him that would do them any good. In fact the most dire stories were being circulated about the happenings in North Street, the large majority of which I hope I had the common sense to discount.

Certainly, the town itself was beginning to be decidedly nervous about its descended god. People fear a man who has had and lost the things they most honour. Having nothing to gain, such a man may forego ordinary behaviour, and experiment on the shady side of ethics; especially, if, as was the case with Dale, he has plenty of money.

There will be those who will say that Dale Tremont did have something to gain; namely, the salvation of his own manhood, which it was not too late for him to hope to recover. But the dreadful fact about him was that salvation of any kind seemed to be the last of his cares.

I was not then acquainted with the special delusion under which Tremont

was suffering, nor with the intense and burning possession it had taken of him. I received two or three short letters from him at intervals of many months, which, had I been curious enough to examine them, contained queer phrases that would have opened my eyes. Only now, after what has happened, do these phrases become sinister and significant.

At that time, I dismissed the letters at once, with a feeling of disgust, and the passing expression of wonderment as to why he should have written them at all. I have since learned that throughout this period he wrote similar letters, threatening and unpleasant, to scores of people, some of whom he had barely met.

Then suddenly his devilry took a new turn which made Dale Tremont's very existence as evil as the plague to everybody who knew him. He bought a printing press. There were no half-way measures about anything Dale did. Evidently he anticipated some difficulty getting his printing done in a community almost solidly ranged against him. At any rate, the large basement of the North Street house served as his shop; his means allowed him to engage the help of a typographer, and he began to distribute as unique a broadsheet as ever issued from a type form. I was indebted to his unsought courtesy for the first number.

We are brought up in the world of everyday to observe somewhat straightened rules of conduct. We strive to keep most of our real opinions to ourselves, and to act, at least in the presence of others, with dignity and reserve. Especially are certain matters understood, without the necessity of rules, to be inappropriate for general discussion. That is to say there is a talk that is unclothed just as people can be unclothed; but the words we use are always more or less becomingly garbed.

Dale Tremont's paper seemed not to have been born into such a world. It seemed to have appeared suddenly in the market-place in broad daylight like an unashamed Lady Godiva. It was less suitable for general circulation

than a jungle tiger is suitable as a nursery pet.

In plain terms it was, beyond all description, awful.

I give you my word, so accustomed had I become to the manners of civilized men, that I scarcely dared read further than a half a dozen paragraphs of the crudely printed sheet. I could see at a glance what the thing was—and the possibility of what it might become sent the cold chills through my marrow.

Worst of all, it was clear that if this new monster of Tremont's were not early strangled it would have a sort of vogue, it would be able, that is to say, to wield a certain kind of power, and to seek, and obtain, a certain degree of protection. Two things Dale Tremont was, in his most reckless flights—he was clever and he was cautious.

My heart went back to home. What in the very devil were they going to do about it? Probably a stray bullet, or an unaccountable fire in the old Tremont house would end it.

In the midst of these gloomy reflections, I ran across a paragraph which reminded me of the gay humour of Tremont's conversation in the old days. I did not like his joke; it was personal, and the inference was clear that it was a joke at the expense of a woman. But some twist of phraseology got a laugh out of me and I felt less like a conspirator in a plot against the peace of the world. Only one thing could happen. The sheet would go on being printed for a time, it would wear out its novelty, and then it would become a laughing stock—be put down as the ravings of a funny man.

The next instant, toward the bottom of the page my eye lit upon two lines which made my blood curdle. I shan't quote what it said. It was a reference to myself. I flung the paper into my log fire. The stray bullet hypothesis came into my mind again and I welcomed it with glee.

For more than a year the thing arrived at my table at irregular intervals. I tried hard not to read it, but inevita-

bly I ended by casting my eye with furtive casualness over its columns. I could picture hundreds of others like myself going through the same struggle, and succumbing at last to the same temptation. I realized that it was upon that sort of curiosity the thing would live.

V

IN the paragraph which ends the last chapter, I have given away my most carefully guarded secret—I have confessed a weakness that has all but led me to ruin a dozen times. And the weakness I speak of is perhaps the most humiliating of all. It is curiosity. It was curiosity which made me an antiquarian, a student of ancient trinkets and evidences, a scandal monger of prehistoric ages.

It was curiosity that gradually overcame my aversion to further dealings with Dale Tremont. There was a sinister glow of fascination for me in his history, his whole progress from bad to worse, but especially his uncanny gift for surviving the most abominable inventions his brain could conceive.

I began to romance about him. I drew analogies between him and all the unscrupulous characters of history and legend I had ever read about. Here was a modern Caligula or César Borgia, who stopped only short of actual assassination. To me the man was a scientific rarity, born out of his time—an effect for which there must be a cause. And I became a prey to the desire to learn the cause.

I have already spoken of the intense sincerity which possessed him, and it is a fact that this earnestness, this obsession with some perverse idealism, crept out in his writings. He began to reflect a wide field of desultory reading. I felt sure most of this reading had been done since the scandal of the Wilhampton. I remembered him before that time as bracing and witty, but illiterate. Now, it was becoming a common thing for him to flirt with the names of Voltaire and Confucius, of

Disraeli and Dean Swift, of Rochefoucauld and Kant and a dozen others of the like in his paragraphs. Again he gave himself up to military ideas, and it was Alexander or Marlborough, or Stonewall Jackson, who furnished him his text.

But more than all else the thing that stimulated my inquiring soul was the fact, gleaned from all sorts of hints and suggestions, that somewhere in Tremont's scheme of madness a woman had suddenly been introduced.

To cut my confession short, I found myself not long afterward in North Street, ringing the doorbell of the old house. I had telephoned that I was coming. It was night, and it struck me that the house was weirdly lit up from top to bottom, as if for an extraordinary reception.

The door drew back revealing an elderly negro in evening dress, who saluted me almost soldier-fashion.

"Mistuh Tremont, suh, yes, suh. Dis way, suh."

I followed him through a small, square vestibule into a hall, where he accepted my hat and stick and nodded me to another door. The room I entered was vast, evidently a pair of the old salons knocked together. The hand of some capable person had kept it rigidly in the antique motif that suited best its high arched doors and casements, heavily molded, and its distant ceilings. The rather dimly diffused light came entirely from a half dozen sconces upon the walls—with the exception of the corner nearest to the door through which I entered. This was fitted up in the manner of an office, with a drop lamp, in the circular glow of which I became aware of a blonde, curly mass of hair bent over a desk. The figure was that of a young woman, busily writing.

She did not look up, and my glance traveled to the light of a hearth fire beneath a great marble mantel at the other end of the room.

From one of the chairs beside the fire rose a solid, mandarin-like figure wrapped in a flowered silk dressing-

gown. It was Tremont, and I derived an overwhelming impression of dissolute power from his appearance. The bare throat and heavy jaws were rolling in flesh; two beady, bold eyes twinkled somewhere in the ruddy circle of his face, a soft, fat hand was thrust out to me and drawn away the instant I had touched it, and as he kicked aside a small rug that was in his path I noticed that his feet were encased in sandals.

He motioned me to a seat and snapped his fingers. The figure of the girl at the other end of the room half rose from its chair, and instantly afterward a trio of negroes appeared in the two great doorways. The old negro who had shown me in advanced into the room and made his curious salute.

"Yes, suh, yes, suh," he mumbled and disappeared.

Tremont dropped into his big chair and leaned toward me suddenly, chuckling. The man's neck seemed to have grown a foot thick, the arteries and folds in it threatening to submerge his head.

"It doesn't matter why people come here," he rasped, in answer to my conventional explanation of my visit. "They all have to come sooner or later. All I'm asking of the world anyway is what that New England mate told his skipper he was going to get or quit. 'Ceevility, sir, plain ceevility, and damned little of that.' I'm getting it, Walton, I'm getting it. What do you think of my camp?"

"Well," I replied, "it's an improvement on the gilded little paradise you used to live in."

"Yes, in those days I drove automobiles, the best they made. I was the first man here to have a French car. Now I drive horses in an open carriage thirty years old. That's progress, according to my notion. Going from speed to leisure is progress."

The man's whole attitude was a little too encroaching, his eyes especially so. As my glance wandered around the room to avoid his, it persistently stopped on the curly head under the

lamp. I tried to conceal my impolite interest in her, but Tremont interpreted my uneasiness.

"My secretary," he said, and called: "Join us, Harmony."

Then he turned to me fairly bursting with exaggerated pleasure over his joke. "Harmony? Isn't that a name for a secretary? Harmony, Walton. There's nothing like having things—and people—fit in!"

The slim, fair-haired girl sat down quietly near us, and began to absorb Tremont with her look. I mean that exactly. Her frank worship of the man, her thrilled silence as she heard him speak, were so obvious that they reduced me to a greater helplessness than I had already experienced face to face with this rugged reception. A moment later the negro arrived with a tray filled with cooling liquids, and I was permitted to rise and stroll about the room. I hoped the conversation might take a less headlong turn toward the monologue.

"I call him the Field Marshal," said Tremont, nodding toward the departing servant, "because he meets all comers and vanquishes them. You wouldn't believe that old head capable of the subtlety it contains. But you'll have to get used to the perfect adjustment of forces I have built up here. Do you know how the Field Marshal gets paid? Well, I compliment him on a new dish or a cocktail, give him plenty to eat, and let him steal moderately. He's satisfied. That's one secret of our organization. No money. No wages. It just happened gradually, of course . . . the way a country, or a court, grows up. There's Harmony. Harmony has capacity enough for a Prime Minister. She's a remarkable stenographer. She's a trained nurse. She has driven an aeroplane. She has been on the stage. She breaks broncos, and can shoot like a trooper, and here she is. The only thing she can't do is to think for me. But I hold her up like the others, so they can see around a little."

His rude guffaw penetrated me like a knife. Yet I could not help looking

at this wonder-woman as he spoke.

Frail and slender, she certainly did not seem the paragon of physical strength he described her to be, but lovely she was. Her hands positively gripped the arms of her chair to prevent her from swaying too perceptibly under the dizzying pleasure of his praise; and her eyes poured a rich, warm flood of speaking gratitude over this ludicrous, bloated, incredibly sickening egotist. She vibrated like the string of a harp under his mawkish touch. But she did not say a word, fearing no doubt lest she should interrupt the stream of his own discourse. Yet it was dread of her open championship of the brute that made me hesitate to open my lips.

"What's it all about, Dale; what do you hope to get out of it?" I asked at last.

"Make 'em come to me," he exploded.

"Who?"

"Why, all of them. The fools that think they are running things, and the fools that are letting themselves be run. I'm between them. They meet in me. And they know it. Oh, they don't want to let on. But they will."

"You're just another reformer, then—a socialist, eh?"

"No, sir. I'm an *émigré*, an aristocrat. The crowd is more stupid than its masters."

"Want to get rich?"

"Money, pooh. Would I stay here if I wanted money? That isn't the thing. It's the secret acknowledgement of the best, and I've practically got that already, only it has to be organized. Every soul in the world wants the feeling of power. My philosophy gives it to them. In another six months I shall have my mailing bureau ready to operate, and then we'll see. Advertising is a great power perverted. If advertising will accomplish what it does in making people give up something to get something else, think of what it will do when I begin to give them the greatest thing in the world—the feeling of power—in return for nothing!"

I wondered just how far I could go

without betraying the fact that I was leading him on in his folly.

"See here, Dale," I ventured, "is your scheme military or political?"

"Military, of course. Politics are absurd."

I had lost all sense of reserve by this time.

"I know what you want," I said. "You aspire to be a dictator."

He sat back blandly, grinned at me, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, why not?"

"No objection at all," I said. "But where are your fighting followers?"

His little pained eyes snapped.

"They'll come," he said. "I told you the people were stupid. They are. But the people will fight . . . they will fight for an idea. And a man always embodies the idea." His voice was low and hoarse and he leaned toward me. "I already have the police. Every officer will do what I say, every one except the Chief . . . and watch him fall."

"You're talking plain treason."

"Truth is treason," he guffawed.

He raised his big bludgeon of a forearm oracularly, and I could hear the breathing of Harmony in the hush that fell over the great, dim room.

"Do you know my secret?" he asked, his voice grown more husky and his eyes bloodshot with the excitement. "*I sit still*. The man who sits still while the world is running away is the center of the vortex, isn't he? Isn't the center of a wheel the only point that doesn't move?"

"I see," I replied, resolving that my examination was ended.

"Damn it, man, I wonder if you do see?" he cried. "It's as plain to me as that firelight. I am the burning heart of the scheme. I couldn't get out of it if I wanted to. The others, the ones farthest from me, are those dead ashes."

Tremont had got up and was standing sidewise with his face glowing in light of the flame.

Suddenly a new idea struck him, and he turned to me, so excited he had suddenly become quiet.

"Walton, by George! . . . you're the man. You're anemic. You're delicate. They'd never suspect you of anything at all. Do you see? I've got to have somebody to appear to be the leader. I won't do at first. I've got to have a blind, understand? You're just the type. I would stand all the gaff, be the real power. But I would hold you up. They'd think it was you."

I laughed unrestrainedly for the first time that evening.

"Thanks, old chap, it's good of you," I assured him. "But I have no political talents."

His voice rose to a roar, and I could see honestly he wanted me to say yes. He regarded me as a valuable tool; and I finally had to close the discussion by telling him I would think it over.

I left the house with an indescribable faintness. In this fantastic topsy-turvy land of Tremont's brain, my nerves had undergone a severe trial. Had it been only for the things he said, I should have departed as light-heartedly as I came. But I must confess that the combination of weird experiences I encountered that night hung over me for days like a strong opiate.

For one thing, he mingled an indescribable modesty with all this boasting. It was the fact that in his most delirious visions he positively *blushed* with the self-consciousness of a boy who has just shown a stranger his biceps. There was something simple and humble and trustful about his sense of greatness that made me see plainly how much he himself believed in it. And the quiet allegiance of his house, of the girl, of the three or four servants whom I encountered—their unquestioning consecration to his welfare—offered too clear proof that he had recourse to some uncanny power.

Had I merely been in a madhouse, I might have shaken off the damnable ague that took hold on me. But it was not a madhouse, it was a perfectly reasonable house, admirably and efficiently run, a house that defied all one's prophecies to the effect that it certainly must

topple in as soon as one had left it, and crush the monstrosity it contained.

Fear possessed me as I walked away, fear for poor Tremont and the emptiness of his vast self-illusionment, fear, pitiful fear for the poor girl who shared it with him, and worse than that, a definite inescapable fear lest this threatened power should ever come to be exercised in reality.

Tremont himself was more than convinced; he was dedicated. Here was a man who, if he was not the tyrant he thought himself, would become so at the cost of any sacrifice of others. And those who were around him were pouring the oil of adulation on the fire, luring him further and further into his desperate error.

I was hastening my steps toward the street car, literally thanking the stars for their company, when I heard a cheery feminine voice behind me.

"Won't you wait a moment, Mr. Walton? I have been trying to catch up with you."

It was the secretary, Harmony. She came up beside me with the easy self-assurance of an old friend. The thought struck me that I ought to reason with this young woman, I ought to save her if I could.

"See here," I broke in, roughly. "I'm ashamed of Tremont for filling you with all that stuff."

"What stuff?" she asked, turning her eyes full on mine, with an expression of child-like interest.

"Why, that nonsense!" I burst out. "You know as well as I do. Dictator, King . . . all that silly rot."

I stopped suddenly. I became conscious of the dead weight of her questioning, puzzled silence. Then I turned and faced her squarely.

"You . . . Why, you don't believe it, do you?"

"I believe *him*," she said.

"The things he imagines about himself?"

"Why, of course. He doesn't imagine them, you know. They have been decreed. He would like to be as other

people are. But he must be what he is, mustn't he?"

Nothing could have been more final. I simply stared at her. In ordinary circumstances I should have put myself down as a rowdy.

"But . . ." I ejaculated. "But that he is great . . . that men need him . . . that we would be better off if we had kings . . . all that sort of thing?"

"Wouldn't we?" she asked, smiling at me with those eyes full of bright faith. "What are men? Men are, well, they're like dogs, or children, aren't they? Always doing wrong, making trouble . . . of course they don't mean to. But they must have a father, mustn't they? There must be some one who understands and leads. I knew it years ago. That men were crying for a master. And I have found him. To think that I am the one who has found him, and that I can help him, Mr. Walton!"

She was radiant. In that dark night, I positively swear a circle of light surrounded her head, and was reflected in her shining eyes. I defy anyone to have avoided half believing her.

"Good heavens," I thought. "It is terrible enough to think yourself a god, but when a really good woman keeps telling you so what hope is there left of sanity!"

I had another glimpse of Dale Tremont that trip. I was in a taxi in the crowded downtown streets on my way to my train. The driver stopped at a crossing, and I felt rather than saw the sudden concerted movement which takes place in a crowd when some strange object comes into sight. The traffic in the street ahead seemed to divide for a moment, then through the middle of it came two spanking bays, smartly pulling an old plush-upholstered, shiny brougham. In the rear seat lolled Dale Tremont bareheaded, attired in his flamboyant dressing-gown, with a plaid robe drawn up over his knees. He had an open volume in his lap; a half a dozen other books were scattered on the floor of the brougham. The old negro who had served us the evening before sat stiff as a rod on the box. I did not

catch Tremont's eye. I did not laugh with the rest of the crowd. I sat in serious and awful concern, watching Tremont, as he gazed severely ahead of him, enjoying this demonstration, I felt sure, as though it had been a triumph.

I cried to my driver to hurry, to take another route, to get me to the station as quickly as possible, and out of this city of hallucinations. . . .

VI

THAT summer in Maine I shall remember always. Not because I fell in love or had any adventures at all. Quite the contrary, it was a summer of hard and continuous work, during which I saw the soul of my first real book arise from the heaps of dry material I had spent a solid year collecting in Spain. I refer to my authoritative work on "Iberian Origins."

The reaction was even more exhilarating than the work itself had been. I went down to New York loaded for bear. I was going to play. The theaters, the Midnight Frolics, the shimmy and the jazz were my program. And if ever a man wanted to be free of embarrassing entanglements I was he. So I could have writhed in bitter anguish when I found Dale Tremont practically waiting for me on my doorstep.

He had been in town two days. He had done nothing except look me up. He counted on me to show him around. He assured me with pompous playfulness that he had not been to New York in five years, and I could see only too plainly, by the silly attitudinizing habits into which he had fallen, that he expected the town to believe he was giving it a treat. In short, he promised to be a voluble and impossible ass anywhere he happened to be put. Even Greenwich Village wouldn't have taken him for a prophet.

I remember glancing at him sharply a second time to make quite sure he was not still wearing the silk dressing-gown. As it happened his dinner suit was the correct thing, but he was fairly bursting

it open and he had the same ruddy, over-fat air of indulgence, resembling behind his white shirt front nothing so much as a geranium blossom emerging from a bottle of milk.

How was I to get by with this overload? Where did he expect me to take him? How long would he stay? I clenched my teeth and decided to give the man every opportunity to hang himself. It was the easiest method. I knew if he made himself a bore the people I took him to see would soon force him to register extreme discomfort.

I am not going to describe what happened. Tremont went with me to three little affairs, where he met some extremely amusing, and a few quite important, people. Each experience was worse than the one before. I knew that my friends began to suspect me of a sudden and general looseness of judgment. Tremont bellowed and interrupted, he guffawed and contradicted, he strutted and grew mysterious, he posed and prophesied and exuded a strong whiff of the intellectual stables.

From the first two of these affairs he came home with me spluttering and indignant and sat consuming things in my apartment until morning. He was decidedly hurt by the mildly offended way people were treating him, but he remained impreguably convinced that a certain chosen two or three had embraced his message with fervent welcome. Even the bric-à-brac in the china shop will smirk and simper a trifle if offered a chance of immunity from the bull. I have no doubt Dale frightened at least half of the people he met into silence. The rest shrugged their shoulders and wondered.

The third excursion ended in a row. I was unaware of anything out of the ordinary until I heard an exchange of sharp words and saw Tremont standing in the door declaiming a rather offensive farewell, with a grand gesture and a grin on his face which clearly required all his composure to maintain. He had said something to a very clever woman, one of the cleverest and most discon-

certing women in the United States, I believe. He should never have tried it.

I found him in my rooms an hour later.

"What the dickens is the matter, Walton? Has New York gone soft? Here I have given my life, my whole life, to the truth. And these people don't see it. By God, I can't be wrong. They *must* be."

His face was purple. He had opened his collar and the upper button of his shirt. He was striding jerkily and a little unsteadily across the room.

I could have howled at him. His departure from Aylston's party, his whole conduct had placed me in a pretty glare of criticism. I had myself left the house amid a perfect battery of arch and suggestive glances. I wondered whether I had a decent acquaintance left. And this fool who had changed the complexion of the world back yonder from his Hickville window-pane, and suddenly discovered that the poor old world was oblivious of his existence, put me in a mordant humor.

"You ought to have hired a hall, Tremont," I said, icily. "The whole trouble with you is you are not thorough enough."

"D'you mean to say I could possibly be wrong? You didn't think so before. You didn't let on."

"Of course I thought so," I replied. "I said so, too. You're funny."

"But cities are no different the world over . . . people either. And back home? You don't *know* how they ate out of my hand."

"Oh, yes, you were a big frog," I answered indifferently, "but my dear fellow, what a small puddle it was?"

The expression seemed to crumple him like a wallop. At that moment I became aware that there was something most awfully tragic about this disheveled, trembling, hopeless mass which loomed shouting above me.

"But, my God!" he cried. "Do you remember Mark Sumner's suicide? I drove him to it. I procured Chief Williams' ruin. He died afterward. He was having my house watched.

Good Heavens! Walton, I've got to be right. I've done too much. I whipped the Hills out of town. There's more. There's lots more. There's Harmony . . . I've fought like a caged bear. I've used everything I had. I thought it was the thing to do . . . I swear, Walton . . . if, if I am not . . ."

As Tremont blurted out his confession I got up from my chair, altogether enraged at last. I tried to speak quietly. His own voice had risen to a hoarse scream.

"I know what you are going to say," I flung out. "You're going to say that if you are not an immortal god, you must be a peculiarly loathsome devil. I didn't know how much of one you were. Now, I begin to guess . . ."

"Walton, for goodness sake . . ."

The huge mass seemed to melt into rivulets of sweat.

"Never mind," I broke in. "I want no more confessions. I want you to get out of here, instantly, as quick as you can. I hate your damned impudence for telling me these things. Tell them to the police! Now go."

VII

A FEW days later I was given a telephone message to call at Bellevue Hospital. A lady had asked me to come and see a friend of hers who wanted me. It was Harmony. She had been back home, worrying about him frightfully, and had felt a sudden intuition that something had gone wrong. She had come on immediately, found him missing at his hotel and searched the hospitals.

The first thing that Tremont asked of me was to serve as witness to their marriage. He had left her his property, but feared the possibility of a family row over it. The poor fellow was utterly changed. He was fearfully weak and sinking. The doctors gave me their professional version of his case, but I had my own idea. I knew that for years he had been scarcely more than an iron skeleton of will, with the flesh hung upon it. It was the breaking of

his will that killed him. But he summoned the strength to tell me the story of that last night after he had left my apartment.

It seems that he walked furiously and blindly about the city. His conscience began to torture him so that he had to stop from time to time actually doubled up with the pain. He presently found himself running into walls, stumbling over gutters and butting into doorways. He was far downtown.

He had been wandering for hours, when he aroused himself from a fit of unconsciousness, sitting in the vestibule of a great building. He put out his hand and the revolving door gave before it. An elevator, with the gate slid back and a light burning in it, stood at the bottom of the shaft. He entered and shot up as far it would go. As he rose he became exhilarated. He was going away from the world. He wanted to get as high above the earth as he could, out of the clutches of men.

He left the car at the top floor and walked to a window at the end of the hall. He guessed he was about forty stories high. Suddenly he had a frantic desire to get out. He began to think about means by which he could reach the roof. In his search for a stairway that might lead to a hatch above, he stumbled over a long coil of stout rope. He made a loop in the end of this and began throwing it upward out of the window. He could not say how many times he threw it, but at last it caught firmly on some projection higher up on the outside of the building, for when he drew it back it became taut and resisted his strength.

He let himself out on the sill and began to climb hand over hand against the wall of the building. He never thought of his danger. All he knew was that he had to get to the very top somehow. He could see the lights of the island city over his shoulder. They seemed to be lashing him on the back, like ropes of fire, driving him up. He had to escape them. But when he reached the top there was no escape either. He tried to hide from the city. It stretched too far

on all sides and leered at him over the low walls. Ten million people leered at him over the walls and cried, "We don't know you . . . we don't know you!"

No, it was not the people, it was the lights that were leering at him so fiendishly. The people, all those millions, whom he had thought so futile, so inferior, so ignorant, all those inconsequential souls simply turned over in their sleep and ignored him. It was horrible. He didn't remember any more. He grovelled a little on the roof, tried to bite the yielding asphalt that covered it, and fell unconscious. A watchman found him in the morning. . . .

VIII

I COULD not sentimentalize much over Tremont's death. If he was really guilty of the offenses he admitted to me, his end was better than he deserved. But when I had comfortably settled Harmony in the Pullman, and sat for a few moments opposite her trim, proud little black-gowned figure, I found the courage to say:

"Harmony, you knew him better than anyone. What was there about him that others didn't know . . . that made you like him so much?"

"I loved him," she answered in a low voice.

"Yes, yes, of course . . ." I said.

She saw my embarrassment and came to my rescue.

"If you mean what made me go to him first, it was because he loved justice. He had a passion for justice . . . for the truth . . ." She paused, trying to find the words to express her meaning. "Perhaps you can't understand. You couldn't, I'm afraid . . . But . . . you remember Dale was hounded out of the Wilhampton Club for taking a woman there? Well . . . that woman was my mother."

The first tear I had seen Harmony shed glistened on her cheek.

"Poor mama," she went on. "It didn't help her any. It didn't result in

anything but harm to Dale. I suppose you can't see. I suppose it seems foolish, a quixotic, useless thing for him to have done. But the president of the Wilhampton then—you know him—was my father. He deserted my mother . . . never married her. And that's why I think what Dale did was wonderful . . . No one on earth but him would ever have thought of it . . ."



Tales

By Harold Cook

I

THERE was an old man living
Where the road turns into the Rue des Eaux.
One day he died
And the neighbours found him.
White and wizened,
Surrounded by volumes of fairy tales.

II

A young boy
Burying the body of his pet hawk,
When told the King was being executed
In the market place,
Lifted not his head.



MARRIAGE is a great relief to a woman. After the wedding she has only one man to bamboozle.



REMORSE is a sign that it wasn't quite as pleasant as one expected it to be.



WHEN a woman is beautiful no one inquires whether she knows how to spell.

Immolation

By Paul Brooks

IT was at breakfast one morning that Reginald Prime first noticed the change in his wife.

She had had one of her discouraging headaches for the last three days and had shut herself up to fight the thing out alone. Prime had wandered about the house, aimless and homesick; he never knew what to do with himself when Lilla was ill. Every so often, he would poke his head into her bed-room in the forlorn hope of finding out that the latest powder or dose of bromide had taken effect miraculously.

The whole business bewildered him. He did pity poor Lilla as she lay in the chilly dark room and kept "wishing to God" he could help her; the feeling of impotence, of actual physical inability to cope with this sort of crisis, irked him. For his part, he didn't know what a head felt like when it ached; of course, it must be damnable torture and all that—but he couldn't help grinding his teeth sometimes and wondering whether a dash of healthy courage in Lilla mightn't be of more avail than the noxious brews she gulped down so frequently.

Prime was healthy and unimaginative; if only he could have put himself in her place, it would have been a tremendous comfort. Well, he couldn't. He therefore took refuge in the conviction that she gave in too easily; the minute a bright light set her temples throbbing or a bitter wet wind put her nerves on edge, she simply collapsed then and there. She hadn't it in her to keep up, to brave it out. She just let the aches and pains have their way; alone in the dark, she naturally became the inert prey of the neuralgia demons. That sort of

thing might be all right when you were forty-five; but, damn it all, *his* wife wasn't thirty yet.

Prime, however, for all his theories, was full of a clumsy sympathy. More than that, a desperate, miserable penitence racked him; for he had the greatest difficulty, during Lilla's fit of agony, in keeping his temper under control. Had he acted, on these occasions, as he honestly wished to, he would have gone about slamming doors, rushing at poor Lilla with a volley of curses, grabbing her by the shoulder and shaking her. A black, ugly rage always obsessed him; he never had taken his fury out on his wife—never would, of course, do anything so abominable.

The furniture in the library, however, came in for many a hard kick. He would stand in front of a chair and swear aloud at himself, at disease, at Lilla; he would positively go out of his wits and attack the nearest object with a vengeance. Then he would of a sudden realize what he was doing. A weary disgust at his disgraceful tirades followed inevitably, with a corresponding exaltation of his worn, fagged Lilla.

He would be at her door, peering gloomily at her, many times an hour. "Is the head clearing, Lilla?" His tone was tender and solicitous.

Prime never knew that his wife, clever, discerning creature that she was, could catch the note, as of an injured baby, in his voice.

"Oh yes," she would return, "it's clearing—"

Prime, keyed to prophetic wisdom by his misery, was aware each time that she lied.

"I don't *believe* it's clearing, you poor thing."

He would strive so hard to be gentle and comforting; but his tone pretty generally contained a dash of brusqueness or petulance.

"Why do you say it's clearing when it don't?"

Lilla could meet this. "Why do *you* persist in poking your nose in at my door and asking your silly questions?" A smile of frank amusement, an ironic tolerance gave her face a momentary brightness. "Go away, for goodness' sake. Call Diana up and ask her if she'll let you dine with her. You've eaten nothing today. That's simply absurd."

"I don't want to dine out. I have no appetite when you're ill, Lilla."

He stood there before her and tossed his head rebelliously. The effect was more than a little ludicrous—as if an enormous grizzly-bear had shown signs of sensitiveness by indulging in a pout and threatening to burst into tears.

"Oh, Reggie, you ridiculous man!" This with a faint groan and a discouraged grimace. "No wonder you're acting like a baby. You don't know what's wrong with you, and it's nothing in the world but an empty stomach, dear."

After a sally of this sort, Prime would withdraw in all dignity. Dine? Not if he knew it! Aware, however, thanks to the perspicacious Lilla, of the acute physical ache within him, of the actual throes of starvation, he would in short order see things with a new light.

Thirty minutes later his nose would once more be visible in Lilla's doorway. "You're sure there's nothing I can do? I think I *will* run over to Diana's. Be back by ten!"

"Yes, by ten!" Lilla would echo sweetly, not the faintest trace of mockery in her attitude. She knew, though, that it would be well past midnight before he showed up again. It wouldn't be Diana Belknap's fault; she would send him away early enough! The trouble was, once he got out of his own house when Lilla was ill, he hated to go back; so he'd take refuge in some club or other and drink and indulge in

desultory small-talk until there was nobody left to jolly with.

II

THEY were always gay and foolish at breakfast, on the days when they celebrated the long-awaited clearing of poor Lilla's head. Prime's happiness knew no bounds; he devoured food voraciously, joked with his mouth full, roared out his lusty glee at the return of the prodigal to health and spirits.

Lilla, too, made a function of the meal; she would wear one of her loveliest tea-gowns and daub her face, in shameless good-humour, with paint. Prime had not a discerning eye and took his wife's blooming countenance in all good faith. Of course on these occasions the unfortunate Lilla was still rather weak; but with her, physical lassitude had the queer effect of inducing hilarity. She made one ridiculous, bland jest after another and laughed immoderately and indiscriminately at her own pleasantries as well as her husband's. Her weakness lent to her laughter a helpless, infectious, almost delirious quality that simply captivated Prime. Breakfast with the convalescent was sure to be a festive period.

It was therefore a decided shock to Prime when he perceived in the midst of the wonderful celebration one morning an alarming change in Lilla.

Even the warm light of the dining-room—clear sunshine tempered and robbed of all crudity by the soft clouds of silk and lace in the windows—seemed like a cruel glare, a concentrated shaft focussed searchingly on her face. The rouge did no good. The circles under her eyes were as distinct as bruises; the net-work of tiny veins appeared swollen and slightly damp. The hollows in her cheeks and at the base of the throat were so striking that they resembled the shadows rubbed in unskilfully in a charcoal sketch.

And yet as she sat across the table from her husband and ridiculed him blithely, she possessed a beauty that was simply radiant. Haggard, worn, she

looked at the end of her resources; but for all that she sparkled and brimmed over with an indomitable gaiety. She held herself erect, her head tilted back, her long neck amazingly thin, the sweep of it by no means smooth—rather, broken by strange indentions. No imperfection of surface, however, could disfigure her nor mar the perfect loveliness and aristocracy that were hers. The inroads of disease would make no difference in her case; she would always retain the conquering spirit, the peculiar distinction that had set her apart from the beginning and had made her finer, rarer than other women.

Prime had never failed to recognize and crow about his wife's unique loveliness. She had headaches and a few other foolish ailments, of course; women did, he'd often remarked to himself philosophically. Once in a while, too, her poor heart got mutinous and palpitated. Unlike the majority of her sex, however, she was wiry, don't you know, wonderful when it came to picking up after a siege of illness. So he had felt both proud of her and sure of her.

The realization of her physical plight, the blinding discovery all at once that as she sat there she looked positively *marked* for death, made him turn sick and faint. If she had died before his eyes without warning, the effect on him couldn't have been more harrowing.

Lilla, while he examined her in uncanny horror, was intent on lighting a cigarette. He hadn't the bodily strength to come forward politely and help her.

She struck one match after another; her wonderful long bony hand shook uncontrollably and she failed three times to keep the flame going long enough to reach her mouth. Then the man behind her chair stepped forward to proffer his grave and successful aid.

Lilla, after she had sacrificed her third match, had grimaced in Reginald's direction.

"I never *heard* of such a silly fool!" she exclaimed savagely. "I hate nervous women. They're burdens to them-

selves and nuisances to their husbands."

Prime was silent.

Lilla leaned back in her chair and examined her reflection in the long mirror at the end of the room. She pursed her lips into a silent whistle of disapproval and ran a hand over her hair.

"I look forty—a suffering forty," she commented. "Thank God for my red hair, anyhow. Poor Reggie! It's a pity that you, of all men, should have a wilted, bedraggled wife."

"Bedraggled!" Prime had at last found voice. He sprang feebly to her defence.

"You're perfect, Lilla. Nobody can wear *clothes* like you."

He spoke truth; she was always gowned and coiffed in superb fashion. She never seemed buttoned into a frock or a morning wrap. Her costumes appeared as much a part of her as did her polished finger-nails. It was impossible to picture her pulling a garment over her head or being clasped into a thing by her maid. She and her gowns were indissoluble; she struck the observer as a sort of perennially blossoming shrub.

Lilla nodded. "No—I'm *not* bedraggled. You're right, Reggie dear. Wilted, though—I stick to *wilted*—"

"Wilted!" Prime tried another scornful exclamation, and failed this time to achieve the ring of conviction.

His wife laughed merrily.

"That wasn't a bit successful," she told him. "Let's agree right off on that point. *I* say I'm wilted; and you admit it unwillingly. It's sad; it glooms our nice party. But we can't dodge the issue any longer, Reggie."

Prime gave her his most adoring smile, then dropped into an abyss of melancholy.

"Lilla, upon my word I ought to be whipped," he burst out. "I simply haven't taken the trouble to study you; to-day for the *first* time I've seen you were ill."

She got to her feet abruptly. "But I'm not ill!" She was sharp. "I'm getting middle-aged, that's all."

She stood before him, erect and ironically smiling.

"Please don't scowl at me in that fearful way," she begged. "Rosy cheeks and thundering eyebrows don't go together well. You're so miserable when you worry, you know you are. Thinking upsets you. Come, Reggie, be yourself or I shan't give you a moment today."

She put her hands on his shoulders and peered inquisitively into his eyes.

"Smile—or I'll box your ears!" she commanded.

He obeyed sheepishly, and, grasping his arm, she led him out of the room. In the library, she swayed suddenly and sank with a desperate sigh into a big chair. In her thrown-back head, her hanging arms and parted lips, there was weariness unutterable. Prime, as he looked down at her, shrugged, partly from wretched discouragement, partly from a bewildered annoyance.

Lilla, overwhelmed by a leaden weakness, made no attempt now at archness or gaiety. She moistened her lips two or three times. Her closed lids shut out everything but a whirling blackness. The skin on her forehead would contract, then become smooth again in a moment. And all the while, a pulse at the base of her throat throbbed visibly, swelling to the beat like a diminutive heart.

Prime groaned. Before the sound had become audible, however, his genuine sympathy had got mixed up with his blind, uncomprehending exasperation—and what had been meant for the gentlest token of solicitude ended as a perfect bellow.

The explosion aroused Lilla somewhat from her anguished daze. She opened her eyes. No human being ever understood another more thoroughly than Lilla in whatever concerned this clumsy man. In the midst of the turbulent chaos of her blood, she could still smile broadly at the absurdity of her husband's involuntary betrayal. She didn't for a moment blame him; she was quite aware that his furious impatience was directed, not at her, but at the demons playing havoc with her. She shared his emotion to the full; and she was tremendously amused.

"Yes, Reggie!" Her breath was laboured. "It's palpitation. I *am* sorry."

The rest of the day proved a fiendish ordeal.

In the past, Lilla's heart had always swung back to its regular beat at the end of an hour or so. On this occasion, however, it whirled and fluttered madly till late in the afternoon. Whiskey, aromatic spirits of ammonia, even hypodermic injections had no visible effect.

Prime dogged the doctor's footsteps; he pleaded, remonstrated, and finally indulged in cynical jibes at the expense of the entire medical profession. Lilla was wonderful; she kept her bland good-nature through it all.

Prime's ministrations were anything but deft; if he had left things to the servants, a great deal of the confusion that reigned might have been eliminated. Once, he put a cup of hot water on the divan at the foot of Lilla's bed; the next moment, he had sat down heavily not an inch away. The impact of his burly body against the upholstery had given the cup such a jolt that it bounced high in air and deluged poor Reggie's trousers with its boiling contents.

It was uproariously funny. Lilla in her weakness laughed until she cried; Prime was so unstrung that he couldn't help chiming in every time he looked at her. Lilla's hysterical fit grew to alarming proportions; she suffered agonies in the grip of her uncontrollable mirth.

Prime was dismissed by the irate doctor. Shut in his own room, he shouted out his helpless, nerve-racking glee, stifled it at last and came creeping back. The moment he caught sight of Lilla he was off again with a stifled snort. Driven out once more, he could hear her anguished, strident, infectious merriment echoing through the house.

The most painful part of the whole business was that Lilla's heart didn't in the end thump back abruptly to its usual rhythm; before, it had always had somewhat the effect of a derailed engine that at last got back on the tracks and went its way again smoothly. This time, the process was gradual, maddening; it was impossible to tell when the flutter ceased

and the normal functioning resumed.

Prime waited in vain all day for the glorious moment when Lilla should snap her fingers and cry, "There! It's stopped!" "There! It's stopped!" meant that everything was all right, the danger passed. Today, the heart action remained feeble, erratic; nobody knew just how matters stood. At six o'clock, however, it was agreed that Lilla was better; by midnight, it was decided that the palpitation must have ceased.

Even so, Prime worried and fretted throughout the night; it wasn't till Lilla greeted him with a mocking smile the next morning that he felt quite easy.

"Yes, indeed, I'm quite ship-shape," she assured him. "I'm *always* better than ever the next day, you know—"

"My God, wasn't it *awful*?" he asked, sitting down on the side of the bed and winding a strand of her gorgeous hair around one of his big fingers.

Lilla stroked his cheek indulgently.

"You were a dear boy, Reggie," she said. "I was horrid to laugh at you. But you are a blunder-buss!"

She shook her head at him and chuckled at the vivid recollection of the dethroned tea-cup.

Prime's answering roar was short-lived; he seemed uneasy and controlled his merriment with unusual promptitude.

Then he gave her a sheepish glance.

"Of course," he announced, with an attempt at adamant determination, "we're going to chuck everything to-night. I'll telephone Diana; you couldn't *possibly* go anywhere for a day or two—"

His voice trailed off in an unconvincing mumble; in his eyes there was an expression of dumb yearning, of downright guilty pleading.

Lilla knew—and Prime realized vaguely—that he should have cancelled their engagements for the night without consulting her. Despite his words, he *was* consulting her at that moment; moreover, he was with perfect guilelessness begging her to go through with things. When he exclaimed, "Lou couldn't *possibly* go anywhere!" he

might just as well have said, "Couldn't you possibly go—*couldn't* you?"

Lilla got it; Lilla never failed to read Prime.

"Don't be silly, Reggie!" She came beautifully to his rescue. "I'm all right. I *want* to get out this evening. You're not to call Diana—do you hear?"

Prime assumed an air of bullying control now. He could afford to argue hotly at present. Lilla's attitude had quieted his fears. Of course, he didn't for a moment guess that his remonstrances had the taint of insincerity.

"Oh come, Lilla," he growled. "You'll stay right in your bed for a couple of days. I never heard of such rot. Dining out after a spell like that!" He indulged in a scornful, artificial laugh.

Lilla shrugged. "I mean it, Reggie. I can't bear to think of being cooped up here for another day."

Prime squared his shoulders.

"I won't humour you, Lilla," he told her. "I'm planning to stay right here tonight." He flashed her a triumphant smile.

"Very well, Reggie—then I shall go alone to Diana's." Lilla grimaced archly in his direction.

Prime had known all along that she would play that card. Well—damn it all, didn't it defeat him, didn't it tie his hands? You couldn't budge Lilla, once she took a stand; you had to fall in, whether you approved or not.

"Oh, Lilla, you're the worst problem a man ever had!" he informed her bitterly now.

He kissed her in sorrowful gentleness and left her, his spirits already soaring at the prospect of the night's boisterous gaiety.

Left alone, Lilla sighed out her utter weariness. A few tears started to her eyes. She shook her head savagely.

"You're a miserable *fool*!" she told herself in a furious mutter. The taunt helped her to keep the drops unshed.

III

THE Primes dined that night with the Orso-Belknaps; Diana Belknap was

caustic with Reggie for allowing Lilla to venture out when she was ill.

"Of course, it's your fault, Reggie," she told him brutally. "You *could* have kept Cousin Lilla at home. She does these insane things just to humour you in your selfishness—"

Prime sulked for a while after that; it wasn't till the plump, adoring girl on his right had cajoled him sweetly for a good five minutes that he regained his usual bland joviality.

They all went on to the opera afterwards. Lilla and Diana had fought the thing out in the drawing-room, after the men had been left to their cigars. The victory had been Lilla's.

"I'm going with you, Diana," she had insisted. "Don't try to reason with me—it wouldn't do any good. I've spent enough time in bed lately; you can't drive me back tonight—"

Prime loved the opera; it was a lark to visit between acts and confess shamefacedly that he'd dropped off to sleep at moments when the music waxed to an over-powering beauty. His routine jokes never failed to bring delighted laughs; he had long been accepted as a sort of professional buffoon, a pleasant entertainer during the entr'actes. People still chaffed him about the occasion, years before, when he'd nearly fallen off his seat in the midst of the "Waldweben." Tonight he was in fine fettle; his progress from box to box could be traced without difficulty by his unrestrained guffaws.

Poor Lilla brought the merriment to an abrupt conclusion by fainting. Prime knew his wife would have preferred to be brought out of it quietly and unobtrusively on the cramped little divan at the back of the Belknap box; she always hated to cause a disturbance and inconvenience people. Prime remembered so well the night, soon after they were married, when she'd collapsed in just this way at a big dance; she'd been *such* a sport—merrier and more adorable than ever fifteen minutes after she'd come to. But there was no use arguing with the vixenish Diana; she insisted this was no ordinary, silly

swoon. So they must needs troop in a body to the motor and listen to the nonsensical murmur of the crowd that collected at their heels.

Diana got in beside Prime; together they supported the limp form of the frail, conquered Lilla.

"We'll be there in five minutes; the doctor may arrive before us," Diana dropped coldly. Then her anger flared up. "Upon my word, Reggie, you're *brutal*. You've been driving her to death all these years—and it never occurred to you that you weren't a model husband."

Prime did not attempt a remonstrance; at that moment, a desperate, overwhelming grief swept him.

With his arms around Lilla, he had realized for the first time how emaciated she was; the transparent pallor of her face, as it hung heavily on his shoulder, aroused in him a swift terror. Diana had told him the truth; it was the conviction of his own guilt that made the torture almost unbearable. He had driven Lilla and she had come to the end of her resources.

The next morning, Lilla's illness showed itself as a thing appalling, triumphant. Nobody attempted to trump up comforting theories; the manifestation of the disease was too ghastly to admit of any subterfuge. Lilla suffered a severe hemorrhage; after that, Prime, the doctors and Lilla herself knew what they were contending with.

IV

THREE weeks later, Lilla had regained strength enough to enable them to move her; so they rushed her, in a private car, to a tuberculosis colony on the borders of Canada. She was still unfailingly cheerful; nobody suspected for a moment that she longed to die rather than face the ordeal of the freezing process.

Lilla had always dreaded the cold; even the New York winters, when she had been surrounded by the people she liked and had basked in the comfortable warmth of steam-heated houses, had

chilled her. And today! She was being hustled into solitary exile; she must suffer—and alone—the icy grip of the fearful climate. Her disease was to be given no quarter; it was to be handled brutally, to be blown on by knife-like winds until, numbed by the inhospitable methods of modern medicine, it relinquished its hold. That was all very well—admirable, in fact; but what under the sun would happen to her tender, shrinking body in the meanwhile?

Her weary protests, however, Lilla kept to herself. Reggie believed passionately in miraculous cures, in the tonic power of ice and snow and bitter winds. Lilla, bravely smiling, confessed that she had the same faith.

Prime, fortified by his theories about efficacy of cruel climates, felt much more cheerful in regard to the future after they'd got Lilla out of New York. Besides, she'd taken the indefatigable Miss Bronson with her. From the first, Prime had relied on Miss Bronson's judgment much more than on the combined efforts of the doctors. Here was a nurse whose whole life was her profession; Lilla's case absorbed her to the exclusion of everything else. Moreover, she loved her patient; and the best of it was that Lilla, who voted most women silly fools and hadn't much use for her sex, was really devoted to the handsome Miss Bronson.

It hadn't taken Prime three days to size up the situation and acknowledge his own and his wife's indebtedness to the admirable head-nurse. He and Miss Bronson had many a lengthy consultation; they'd talk, they'd argue for hours—and never once did they touch even remotely on any subject but Lilla's illness.

Established in the frozen north with her patient, Miss Bronson wrote Prime every day a complete report of just how things stood. It was an up-hill climb; sometimes there would be periods of several weeks during which Lilla made no progress. When she did improve, the change was marked only by a gain in flesh of an ounce or two here and there.

Prime would have despaired had it not been for Miss Bronson's assurances; her messages of comfort were particularly satisfying because of the fact that she didn't once keep the more alarming things back. She told the whole truth; and Prime knew, at the end of two months, that he had a right to feel encouraged by her verdict—"a slight but distinct and consistent improvement."

The winter went rather well on the whole. People were nicer to Prime than ever before; they did their best to make things pleasant for him. He rushed about everywhere, of course; Lilla had made him promise he would. He was really so busy that he didn't have time to worry or fret, except when he lay awake in his bed; only in those moments of self-communion did he experience grief with its constant accompaniment of remorse.

Then Lilla's plight, her lonely struggle far away in the gripping winds she hated, came to him with a terrible distinctness; he would shiver uncontrollably at the vision of her—bowed, emaciated, stricken, her wasted body numb and convulsed from cold, with ice in her veins and an aching chill at her very heart. Sobs would swell and struggle in his throat and force themselves out with the report of an explosion.

At such times, he would achieve a savage satisfaction in stripping himself naked, as it were, exposing with angry scorn his deplorable weaknesses, and focussing attention on his complete, overpowering selfishness. He could remember now all his fits of exasperation over Lilla's illnesses—petty ailments, silly complaints that she shouldn't have surrendered to, he'd always grumbled in the past. Well, he'd had the same moments of fury *since* the hemorrhage that had made all the difference. In these silent vigils of Prime's, the thought of Miss Bronson's ministrations brought no comfort; rather, it increased his self-contempt.

Twice each month, Prime visited his wife. The first glance at her always caused him a pang; it would take some

time to get reconciled to her bluish pallor and her unlovely wrappings. Lilla without rouge, with thick serge dresses and high collars, her hair drawn back and knotted simply, looked miserable and old; the Spartan life was not becoming to her, he had to admit sorrowfully. *His* Lilla, exquisitely gowned, elaborately made up, with her gorgeous hair piled high, had been such a brilliant creature! He wouldn't have believed that cold weather and simple clothes could cause such havoc. The stinging winds that brought to his cheeks a flush positively apoplectic and that gave Miss Bronson's complexion a beautiful rose tint, whipped all the blood out of poor Lilla's face, pinched it, made it wan and discolored.

Still she hadn't lost—she never would lose her unique aristocratic distinction. She held her head high and dominated the scene; haggard, terrible in her emaciation, but unconquerable and of compelling charm—that was Lilla. Miss Bronson saw it as distinctly as did Prime; during the long tramps over the snow that the two took, they never ceased marvelling over Lilla.

Little by little, her strength returned; at last, in February, she was able by hanging on her husband's arm to walk short distances in the open. That particular trip of Prime's was a joyful one; when it came time for him to go, a wave of loneliness swept over him.

Lilla kissed him, sweetly casual, on the cheek; as Prime put his arms out, she drew back.

"I'm going to the station with you," she announced unexpectedly. "It's only a five minutes' walk—and your train won't leave for half an hour. You'll come for me, Miss Bronson, and haul me back?"

Their road was a straight one, with the absurd station in view from the first. The ground rose almost imperceptibly; it would never have occurred to Prime that they were walking uphill. For Lilla, however, it was as exhausting as mountain-climbing. Every few moments, she would tug on his

arm and they would come to a stop while she fought for breath.

At length they reached a little grove of gaunt, twisted firs a few hundred feet from the railroad tracks; Lilla sank heavily on the stump of a tree. Prime stood behind her and she rested her head against his chest. They were silent for a time.

"So you think I'm going to get well!" Lilla's voice was weak, broken by short gasps. "I haven't a chance in the world, Reggie."

Prime bent over and laid his cheek against hers.

"Lilla, Lilla!" he pleaded. "You mustn't say such things; you've got to be brave and fight it out. Keep up your *courage*—that will save you."

Petulantly she drew her face away from his caress.

"Don't, for heaven's sake, talk nonsense," she exclaimed. "I know I shall die soon; I know it, because I see things so clearly all of a sudden."

She paused and sighed unevenly.

"At least," she corrected herself, "I face the facts now. I've really *seen* clearly enough from the beginning; but I've been such a fool, I've acted so madly all my life. I loved you, Reggie—I've been blind, insane ever since you first appeared. I *saw* clearly enough, remember—a weak, untrustworthy person you've always been and I wasn't ever hoodwinked; but I swore I'd *keep* you and now I've killed myself doing it."

She ceased abruptly and, raising her head, drew the cold air into her lungs with difficulty.

Prime, bewildered and heart-sick, pressed her to him.

"Don't talk like that, Lilla dear," he protested. "You don't know what you're saying. You're tiring yourself out—"

She struggled feebly to loosen his arms, then submitted.

"Didn't I tire myself out every day—every night—for years?" she asked him. "You didn't complain then; why should you now? That's so silly! But Reggie!" She spoke with an unex-

pected firmness for a moment. "I don't blame *you*; it's myself I've no patience with. For years I have known I was killing myself—but I went right on, because of my grotesque infatuation for you. Who would have suspected I was such an animal? It's been rather disgusting—beastly. You were stupid, you were brainless, you were a bore, Reggie; I was clever, I was too good for you. Well—you were handsome, and I was content to kill myself on that account. I've come to my senses now—just in the last few weeks—Reggie, you weren't *worth* keeping; you weren't worth the suffering I've been through for you. I suppose I'm cruel to tell you this; after all, it wasn't your fault. But I *had* to tell you. I couldn't die, I couldn't give you up to another woman without the satisfaction of showing you I didn't *care*, Reggie."

With one of her old-time vigorous gestures, she loosened his arms and stood before him with a mocking smile.

Prime, shaken and miserably confused, gave her a long look of stupid, uncomprehending agony. He felt stunned. He spoke, without knowing what he stammered out.

"For God's sake, Lilla—how can you? What right?—? Something's wrong—you're not well, dear—"

Lilla still smiled.

"Don't be a goose and wait a year after I'm dead, Reggie," she advised him.

Suddenly the sound of a locomotive bell broke the stillness; in the echoing solitude, the clatter was startling, like a staccato hand-clapping or a fit of brazen laughter. Lilla swayed and groped blindly for support; on her face there was an expression of mute terror. Her eyes glittered as she fixed them on her husband and she shuddered helplessly. Prime caught her to him; her cold lips felt for his and clung with a wild passion.

For him, at that moment, tragic tenderness and pity and remorse blotted out everything else; for Lilla, it was a last perilous surrender, a final, acute-

ly physical transport. It was almost in the nature of a gruesome immolation—the culminating, suicidal act of the infatuation she had claimed she was cured of.

She broke from him at last and, taking a few tottering steps backwards, rested against one of the trees. Catching sight of a figure that approached along the white road, Lilla drew herself up quickly and struck her hands together in a frenzy of impatience.

"Reggie—don't stand there so stupidly. Run!—you'll lose your train." She spoke with rapid vehemence. "Please—oh, Reggie!" A strident, angry note sounded in her voice as he still hesitated. "I'm all right, I tell you. Be quick—it's pulling out—"

She fixed him with a resolute glance, her head held imperiously high, an expression of furious command on her face. "I don't *want* you here any longer; I want you to go before *she* comes. She'll be officious; she'll call me 'darling'—all for your benefit! Oh, how I hate her professional chatter, how I hate you when you're with her!"

She tossed it at him defiantly; his blind stare showed him at a loss. She had meant it to be the accusation that would make transparently clear all she had said before. And she had failed—she saw it at once; he hadn't an idea of what she was driving at!

Prime, his head in a fevered whirl, blundered up to her, kissed her without consciousness of her swift recoil and started off at a mad race for his train. Lilla, crouched weakly against her protecting tree, was racked for an instant with sardonic mirth at the vision of the grief-laden husband rushing pell-mell for the railroad station! Soon, however, her laughter changed to a fit of hysterical sobbing.

For Prime, the succeeding hours were agonizing; he was haunted by the scene he had caught for a moment after he had scrambled on to the platform. The region had never looked more desolate; it was late afternoon and the sky was a wet leaden grey, heavy with a congregated mass of unshed snow. In all the

white world, with its chill, watery-blue shadows, there was no slightest stain of bright colour. The wind, as it crept stealthily in and out of the trees, had a ruminative, dreary moan, almost like the first notes of a keening song. The underbrush rustled and rasped faintly,—as if even the earth in this forbidding outpost suffered from a consumptive complaint! And Lilla stood in the midst of the oppressive gloom, her once vivid, gayly tinted figure black like her surroundings. She had turned around now and, with her face pressed against the tree, sobbed in a harsh anguish that rose at intervals to muted cries as inhuman and terrifying as an owl's hoot.

Of a sudden, the sounds, raucous, convulsive, full of a savage resentment, sank to a low, choked note and shivered out. Lilla, with her hands pressed to her mouth, suddenly faced about and confronted Miss Bronson, who had hurried up to her in a panic.

That was all Prime saw; the train rounded a curve at that moment and shut out the pitiful spectacle.

V

PRIME, whose terror had grown on him every minute, got off at the first station. No train that night! He tramped and tore about till dawn broke. The early morning train got off only after a maddening delay; the snow was falling by now in blinding swirls and eddies.

It was past noon when Prime reached his wife's door. Miss Bronson met him. Drawing him down beside her on a bench in the entrance hall, she led up tenderly, beautifully to the dread fact that Lilla was dead.

Lying on her bed, her face yet twisted with her agony, Lilla was an ironic comment on Miss Bronson's hushed harangue. "She passed away—like a tired child. No suffering—ah, it was heavenly. She said only the one word 'husband'—"

Reggie had broken down utterly at that. His companion soothed him gently, with a complete self-effacement in her ministrations. For the first time in his life, Prime was being made acquainted with sentimentality in its highest estate. His grief was overwhelming, complete, terrible; but as he sat there shaken with sorrow, the first step towards the fulfillment of Lilla's prophecy was made. For Prime, an assuagement of his pain could come only through the balm of tender reminiscence, of sweetly comforting words—in short, through that exercise of sentimentality so alien to Lilla and so natural to Miss Bronson.

Miss Bronson had lied about Lilla's death, of course; and it was really quite right that she should have. As a matter of fact, Lilla had not spoken a word after Prime left her; when the nurse reached her side, a hemorrhage had already begun. She had suffered throughout the night and had died in a grim, implacable, resentful silence.



THE most lovely picture in the world is that of a young mother crooning her baby to sleep. Nevertheless, this is the same girl who, a short while back, lured the baby's father behind a palm, gazed at him dreamily, gave a sad sigh, and so convinced him that he was crazy with love for her.



The Swan Song of a Kiss

By Lawrence Vail

I

HE was a pleasant, popular young man, even though he often rode the high horse, and thought himself outrageously cynical. She, fresh-complexioned, easily delighted, somewhat melancholy now and then when touched by the vague, subdued smart of desire. In the summer she spent most of her time in the garden, dressed in frocks of white-dotted muslin which had been made over from things her mother used to wear as a girl. She looked well in these things, but was somewhat ashamed of them. She feared that they might prejudice her destiny.

He hardly talked to her during dinner. His neglect saddened her a little, though she could not resent it. There was no reason why so clever and experienced a man should take notice of a girl barely out of school. And yet—nobody knew this but herself—she was hardly as simple as she appeared.

His theme, a contempt for the usual and conventional which he developed with more brio than wit, struck her as audacious. That she was the only member of her family not to be shocked sent through her a thrill of excited superiority. Her father muttered something about the youth of today for whom nothing was sacred. Her two aunts said nothing, but looked grievously pained. Her mother, Mrs. Temple, vainly tried to relieve the situation by interrupting the young man with her stock of domestic anecdote.

Only Mrs. Ludlow had remained unruffled. But then she had been twice wedded, once divorced, and was now a widow. It was hardly probable that anything could make her uncomfortable.

She listened to the young man with a smile of gentle mockery which finally disconcerted Robert.

Cynthia found herself resenting that smile.

II

It happened after dinner, in the garden, when he stopped to help her free her skirt, which had caught in a thicket. She was wondering why he took so long over so simple a task when he caught her to him and kissed her.

Her first sensation was one of surprise. Then a quick rush of joy, followed by a tremour of fear. She made an effort to recover her poise. She decided that she should not be feeling joy and fear. She made an attempt to convey that she felt astonishment, horror and anger.

The sensations of the young man were of a somewhat different order. While stooping to disentangle her skirt the idea flashed upon him. There ran through him a wave of curiosity, desire, then a quaver of fear quickly forgotten in a riot of recklessness. Afterward he felt nothing but surprise and pleasure. The joy derived from the kiss had exceeded his expectations.

III

HER movement of anger had been too long delayed to make him consider it entirely genuine. It was an invitation, he knew, for him to apologize, term himself scoundrel, brute, boor and ruffian. He pondered a little, decided to ignore the invitation.

"I'm not sorry," he said. "I liked it."

His words, like his kiss, took her un-

awares. She could not but be amused, to the detriment of her indignation.

The young man pursued his advantage.

"Why should I ask your forgiveness," he inquired, "for something which we both enjoyed?"

This was an excellent pretext for anger. It was insolent of him to assume that she had found pleasure in the kiss. But again she delayed a trifle too long. In the interval he kissed her again.

IV

A FEW minutes later they joined the party. They were both, especially Cynthia, extremely self-conscious. She thought that merely by looking at her everybody must know that she had been kissed.

She sat down between her two aunts and started to talk effusively about the weather, servants and needlework. The young man, who thought her bashful and inexperienced, was somewhat disconcerted. He remained curiously silent. He had acquired, during his career as man of the world, a manner of sophisticated conversation, cultivated it with so much assiduity that he could talk in no other way. He realized that this was hardly the hour for cynicism, however brilliantly expressed. He was positive that he still clung to his opinions concerning the lightness of women, though he made an exception of her. If he talked in his accustomed vein, he feared that she would think that he also thought lightly of her.

No one except Mrs. Ludlow seemed to be aware of anything unusual. Suspicious by nature, Robert's unnatural silence, Cynthia's unwonted exuberance, struck her as peculiar. She was particularly observant, as she had previously made up her mind that he was going to entertain her this evening. It piqued her to be baffled by what she considered a raw slip of a girl.

Gradually Cynthia came to an end of her chatter. For a time she had resolutely kept the thought of the kiss out of mind; it now returned with increased

vehemence. She found herself repeatedly seeking and avoiding the young man's eyes.

He, too, was under the spell of the kiss. It was fresh on his lips, like a fruit tasted on a hot summer's evening. He did not dare look at her too often, but now and then he would open and close his lips, thereby signifying that he would fain repeat an agreeable experience. He was pleasurably aware that she saw and appreciated his manoeuvre.

V

At ten o'clock Cynthia was sent to bed. In the privacy of her room the kiss took on a new life. It became more vivid, more present, more actual. It was warm, gentle, provocative, penetrating. It made her feel guilty, wistful, happy and sad. It ran over her hands, throat and cheek. It stirred her like wine, soothed her like a lullaby. It thrilled her and comforted her. She carried it with her when she went to sleep. She found it in her dreams, beckoning her to sweet, clandestine adventure. And, while she slept, it curved her lips into a smile. Her fingers, tightly clasped, seemed to be holding something precious.

The young man remained in the garden. Champagne was served. He was in a fever of excitement, the first glass went to his head. It turned the kiss into a mist of soft flame that spread all over him.

After his second glass the young man found in him a desire to talk. He wished there were someone in whom he could confide his rapture. He might tell his mother if she had the sympathetic understanding mothers are supposed to possess. Unfortunately he knew that she would give but half an ear to him, so constantly was she engrossed by problems of a domestic and economic nature.

Again, if he told his sister, she might understand him too well. In fact she might be tempted into dangerous experiment. He could not take the chance of her being kissed. He did not exactly

know why, but there was something defiling in the kisses of other men but himself. If he told his friends they would be sure to retaliate by narrating their adventures with barmaids and chorus girls. It shocked him to think that Cynthia should be mentioned in the same breath as these other women.

The young man poured himself another glass of champagne. He now began to visualize imaginary people in whom he could confide. He hovered between a taciturn, sentimental, middle-aged bachelor with no sense of humour and a sympathetic, white-haired woman of fifty.

He continued to drink. He began to feel that he was not quite so particular about the kind of person in whom he could confide.

A little later—he was now well on the road to drunkenness—he found himself walking up and down the garden with Mrs. Ludlow. The kiss still clung to his lips, but it had the taste of a fruit that has long been fermented in punch.

He began to realize that he was somewhat sad. He heard the widow sympathizing with him, but was not quite sure whether it was because he was drunk or because he was in love. . . . Whatever the cause for her sympathy, he found it agreeable. He felt vaguely that he was under an obligation to show her his gratitude. He essayed a few halting phrases. Suddenly he found himself kissing her.

As he kissed her, repeatedly, the other kiss nearly expired.

VI

NEXT morning the young man had a headache. Searching in his throbbing brain, he gradually recollected some of the events of the night before. First, that he had drunk more than was good for him, then the widow's experienced caresses.

For a while he lay in bed, good-humouredly remonstrating with himself. The idea that something was expected of him pleased and irritated. Should he, or should he not, go on with the adventure?

Presently another recollection broke on him, one that caused him to view his subsequent behaviour with more shame than tolerance. Piercing through the taste of stale champagne and Mrs. Ludlow's kisses came a fresher and sweeter flavour. It hung on his lip like a berry discovered at the bottom of a long cup of wine.

Robert decided that he loathed champagne. He decided that he hated the widow. He even took a partial dislike to himself.

To the kiss which had all but expired this hatred was bread and wine. It assumed a new life.

He debated whether he should call on Cynthia that afternoon. If he looked as he felt, there was the risk of disillusioning her. On the other hand, if he delayed his visit, the sincerity of his ardour lay open to suspicion.

VII

THE kiss was warm on her lips when Cynthia awoke. It sweetened everything for her: the sun pouring through the window, the bread and butter at breakfast, the breezes and flowers in the garden.

She knew Robert would not call before afternoon, so she went for a walk with Mrs. Ludlow. The conversation, which was hardly displeasing to Cynthia, turned on the young man.

"A clever youth!" said the widow.

Cynthia assented mildly. She was quite proud of the way she concealed her emotion.

"A pity he drinks!" said Mrs. Ludlow.

Cynthia started.

"Don't all men drink?" she inquired with as steady a voice as she could command.

"All men don't get drunk," Mrs. Ludlow replied.

The young girl had a rush of resentment. She was certain now that the widow had discovered the trend of the young man's affections. No doubt she was jealous.

"I'm sure," she said hotly, "that he never gets really drunk."

"He was drunk last night," pursued Mrs. Ludlow. "I could not keep him from kissing me."

Within her Cynthia felt something being torn, being wrenched. Her head swam. She saw Robert's lips. Mrs. Ludlow's lips. . . . A thick nausea rose through her. She felt the kiss, like something unclean, indecent, branded upon her lips.

VIII

WHEN he called she received him frigidly. He had an unfortunate impulse, decided to take her by storm. But his movement to kiss her, which he expected to be but feebly resisted, was met with genuine anger.

The young man had his share of vanity: it told him that he was being infamously treated. She had played with him till she was tired, she had tired soon, now she had no further use for him. She was like other women—trivial and shallow.

"*C'est à prendre ou à laisser,*" he said with his most blasé air.

Then, as she showed no inclination to take him, he bade her good-bye.

She had a short return of tenderness as she watched him go through the door. She resisted, however, an impulse to call him back. Instead she sat down at her *escritoire* and wrote a number of invitations to her other men friends.

For a week she danced, giggled, flirted. She was assured by Saturday that the kiss was dead for all time.

IX

BUT the kiss would not leave him in peace. He sought other lips, but they failed to satisfy him. They gave him a sense of deception which enhanced the virtue of the kiss in the garden.

The young man was compelled to admit that he was in love. The knowledge that his passion was hopeless did not overwhelm him with despair. Her coldness was not, he told himself, an unalloyed evil. She was not worthy of him.

Still he felt somewhat romantic, an object of considerable interest to himself. It troubled him a little at first that no one noticed how he had changed. But then the world was blind.

He still went out in society. One must, he argued, keep up appearances. He talked as much as formerly, but was successful in weaving sinister phrases into his conversation. Again he was surprised to observe that no one observed the change. He came to the conclusion that the world was deaf as well as blind.

A week passed. The young man made a supreme resolution. He had his life to live, he would get cured. Surely it was ridiculous to go through his time on earth with an open wound which nobody noticed. He must dominate his emotion, force himself to forget.

He would go forth on a journey. To the south, perhaps, where women were willing. Or to the wilderness, where there were no women at all. He consulted his pocket-book. Banknotes were scarce. He bought a ticket for Hawthorne-on-the-Sea.

For a whole day he roamed over the beach, with no companion save his disenchanted memories. In the evening, after dinner, he permitted himself to be drawn into conversation with a young girl. She was pleasing to look upon—a pity he had no longer any taste for women. On the other hand, it was his duty to accept any amusement which came his way. There was a possibility that she might help him forget.

It was early in the season, the resort was deserted. The girl had been at Hawthorne-on-the-Sea since the beginning of June with her invalid mother. The only diversions were two retired colonels, walks in the country, swimming and reading. Unfortunately, she was lazy, disliked reading, and had an aversion for men over fifty.

She was not particularly attracted to Robert—he struck her as slow. Not being a reader of poetry, his jaded, melancholy air did not appeal to her. He was, however, a man. He was a young man. He was the only young man at

Hawthorne-on-the-Sea. The next day, while walking with him on the beach, she felt tired. It became apparent, as she leant on his arm, that he was not so slow as she had feared.

That night he found himself making love to her. He discovered on her lips a glimmer of hope. Life, after all, might be worth living if one were not too exacting.

Again the kiss seemed to die.

X

EVENTUALLY the young man got married. He had a home, two children, a thriving business in the city. He was fond of his wife, he thought she adored him. He had everything to make him contented, yet there were hours when he was not entirely satisfied. Sometimes, on these occasions, he would turn wistfully to the past. Once he discovered the kiss where it had lain with a number of its kind in the dust of his mind. It exhaled a faint fragrance which inclined him to reminiscence. It startled a vague longing which was easily forgotten.

The young girl also got married. She had a comfortable home, a husband with a profitable business, a child. She considered herself fortunate, still she had hours of unrest. Sometimes she would delve into the closets of the past. Once, among a number of sundry sentimental recollections, she encountered the kiss. It gave forth a faint perfume like that of a flower preserved among the pages of a book. She might have been sad had she not quickly forgotten it.

XI

ONE day—it happened that they were both restless and dissatisfied—they met at a mountain resort. His wife was in town with the children. Her husband was kept in the city by business. There were few people about. They spent considerable time together.

Carefully avoiding the past, they

talked about the less important events of their lives. Then, having nothing more to say, they were silent. Gradually the memory of the kiss returned to their minds. A constraint developed between them.

That evening they made an attempt to refresh an ancient memory. Though they put the best of their efforts into their task each was somewhat disappointed. They did not find what they expected.

In the following days they continued to make love to each other. Having begun, each thought it a duty to continue. Neither was willing to confess to failure. Now and then they persuaded each other of their affection. There were even rare occasions when they were successful in persuading themselves.

The kiss had entered the final phase of its life.

XII

NEITHER was willing to admit his relief when the day came for them to return to the city. In the last hour there was a sudden return of their ancient tenderness. They exchanged promises—not altogether insincere—of eternal affection.

The kiss was singing its swan song.

He was going to call her up as soon as he had settled certain pressing affairs. His wife was very affectionate to him, inquired whether he had been lonely. As he was fond of her, he was remorseful at having deceived her. Cynthia, at her home, was undergoing a similar transformation.

Each felt, however, a certain obligation toward himself and toward the other. They made an appointment to meet at five o'clock at the Ritz. By fifteen minutes past five she had not appeared, and he returned home by a circuitous route to avoid any chances of meeting her. And when she arrived, purposely half an hour late, she was more relieved than piqued not to find him.

Within a month the kiss died.

He Would Marry Again

By Carl Glick

HIS first marriage was a failure and ended in a divorce. And he winced when his wife asked to take back her maiden name. But not daunted, he planned to try again. So to the matrimonial agency he wrote, telling them of the qualities he wished for in the proposed wife. . . .

"She must be a woman, soft of speech, gentle in disposition, meek and mild, considerate and forgiving. It is not necessary that she have money. Sympathy is more to be desired. Perhaps you know of a woman whose former husband mistreated her, and cold, brutal, and unfeeling killed the love in her heart. To me let it be given to awake the flame again. To me let such a woman come that I may see the birth of a starved soul."

And the agency replied, giving him the name and address of his former wife.



F Sharp Minor

By Muna Lee

I shall be a little poet
And sing of little things—
I who love the gray dove's breast
More than the cardinal's wings.

I who love most the deepening mist
Before it falls in rain:
I who love the snow-filled cloud
More than the snow-heaped plain.

Who above the rose's arrogance
Sets the spiderwort's green spears—
Oh, I shall sing of little things
Nor care if no one hears.



The New Love

By V. H. Friedlaender

I

THE attractive young man in white flannels murmured several times with conviction a word which, though brief, is not always printed in full. He then, with a reckless disregard for his whiteness sat—or, more accurately, crumpled—down against the red brick wall that had been the scene of his interview with Una Mansell.

Una Mansell was the attractive young woman in pale blue linen who, now retreating down a sun-dappled glade, was being absorbed gradually and harmoniously into the woodland vista! But even in retreat her back continued to express lofty and unshakable purpose.

The young man's face, on the other hand, was an arena of two warring emotions. In part he had the creased and almost tearful look of a disappointed baby; in part he exhibited a certain complacent, if humorous, appreciation. But it was the disappointment that after a moment prevailed. He murmured his relieving word once more.

"No use, was it?" observed a singularly soft and sympathetic voice from somewhere, as it seemed to him, in the circumambient ether. "But then, of course, you did it all wrong."

He looked up quickly, and there, seated on the wall immediately above his head, was a contrasting but at least equally attractive young woman.

He recoiled—as far as anyone sitting down can be said to do so. "No, really—you mustn't!" he warned her hastily.

She looked surprised. "Mustn't what?"

"Talk to me—get to know me. You'll regret it. I assure you it won't be good for you!" he urged.

Mastering her surprise, the young woman on the wall tilted her delightful head slightly, the better to consider him.

"But what I was hoping," she explained engagingly, after a pause, "was that it might be good for you."

"No—no," he continued repressively. "You don't understand; you don't know me. Excuse me, but I *must* speak plainly. I—I am not liable to love's young dream. And even if I were, it would be my duty to tell you that I am by no means off with the old love yet. In fact, as far as I can see, it is extremely doubtful whether I ever shall be. But if I were—oh, if I were!—the very last thing I should contemplate would be to be on with the new."

It must be recorded that the words did not speak nearly as badly as they print. For the young man had, to an unconscionable degree, the quality of charm. And so, although he spoke with vehemence and haste words very seldom addressed with impunity to attractive young women, there was a kind of undercurrent to them, as though he did not really so much repudiate the advances of the lady on the wall as throw himself on her mercy with regard to them, and invite her to share the humours of his situation.

So, at any rate, she must have taken it, for she leaned suddenly toward him, smiling.

"Are you asking me," she enquired—with renewed astonishment, indeed, but without resentment—"not to fall in love with you?"

"Yes—yes," he agreed gratefully, but now (since the matter was made clear) a little absently. "Just that. Just to get down off that wall and go home, if you will. There's a good girl." He settled

himself firmly once more against the wall, and entered upon a period of meditation.

The good girl considered this proposal on its merits.

"I can't do that," she decided, however.

He sighed, though without abandoning his preoccupation; it was as if what she said were so familiar that he heard it subconsciously.

"No, I was afraid you wouldn't," he observed. "They never will."

"Because I am at home," she added.

"Because you are at home?" This, evidently presenting a variation from the familiar, secured his fuller attention. He brought his eyes back to her. "I see. This wall—is a garden wall, then?"

"Yes. And I am staying in the house that goes with the garden. And as I was cutting lavender a little while ago I heard voices. And I—" she hesitated.

"Couldn't—help—overhearing—what we—said," concluded the young man as though it were one word, and a poor one at that. "Of course. Exactly."

She considered this, too, with deliberation, but rejected it.

"Well, no," she amended. "I came up closer to listen."

"You did?" With incredible swiftness he scrambled to his feet. "I congratulate you!"

"You con—?"

"Of course!—on being done with lies and hypocrisies and conventions," he explained with joyous rapidity. "You must have noticed the same thing in me. Instead of pretending, for instance, that it is young women who attract me, I tell the simple truth, tested by experience, which is that I am dangerously attractive to young women. Instead of telling Una that I find I am not worthy of her, I ask her frankly to be released from my engagement because I don't want to marry her. And instead of giving you to understand that you are at liberty to catch me if you can, I tell you honestly at once that you haven't a chance. And so on."

He paused for breath. The young woman on the wall was looking down at

him with what was undoubtedly fascination.

"I see, she murmured, a little blankly; almost, he feared, a little regretfully.

"Of course," he added, seeking to brace her with his impersonality, "the idea is still new to you; but the root of the matter must be in you, or you wouldn't have confessed to coming up closer to listen. Frankness!—that's the thing, you know; good or bad, frankness about it. In literature, in art, in life. Think of the time it saves, just at the expense of a little courage. And then the misunderstandings that it clears out of the way of love and friendship!"

He glowed up at her, but her regard was now pensive, perhaps dubious—not, at any rate, wholly apostolic. "Well," he prompted confidently, "what's your difficulty?"

"I was only thinking," she confessed, "that, if that is so, what about the lady—the lady who, just now—"

"Oh, Una?" His eyes clouded. "Yes, Una appears to be an exception with a vengeance, I admit." He relapsed into harassed thought. "You heard what I said to her?" he demanded presently.

"Every word," she conceded, with the candour that he had admired.

"And I didn't mince them?"

"No—oh, no!"

"Very well, then. Can you explain it?"

"Yes," she said. "It's what I've been trying to do ever since we—met."

"You have?" His lips fell apart, and from her perch above him she suddenly spilt a cascade of laughter.

"You look," she elucidated, "like a baby bird waiting for me to drop the worm of wisdom into your mouth."

But he was not to be thus easily disconcerted.

"That's it!" he encouraged heartily. "You're getting the hang of it splendidly. Well, then, *explain*, will you?"

"Why, you went the wrong way to work, as I began by telling you. I happen to have been thinking of the subject lately; it comes into a play written by a friend of mine, and he has treated the situation as you treated it just now.

I knew he was wrong; but now I shall be able to prove it to him—from real life. That's why I came up to listen; I could hear you making the same mistake."

"What mistake?"

"Talk," she said briefly.

"But how," he protested, "can a man break off his engagement *without* talk? And for that matter, as you've heard for yourself, I haven't been able to do it, even with all the exceptional amount of talk at my command."

She nodded. "That's because you've done nothing *but* talk, I should think. Have you?"

"No; but—" The light of her meaning suddenly dazzled him.

"Are you telling me," he demanded, "that, for all my plain speaking, Una doesn't really believe I want to be rid of her?"

"She doesn't believe it. I don't know, of course, what grounds she may have for not believing it, but she doesn't."

"Oh, as for *grounds*!" Clearly, by the light of this new suggestion, he reviewed a host of them. "By jove, I believe you're right!" He spoke with the liveliest interest. "And I say—as you know all about it, anyhow, there'd be no harm in my telling you, would there?—and just asking your advice?"

"If you don't," she assured him, "I'll thrust it upon you."

"But, I say—!" He was checked by obvious misgiving.

"Well?"

"Well—I mean—" he abandoned himself resolutely to the exigencies of his creed—"you won't go and get fond of me yourself, now will you?" he appealed.

She reflected. "How can I tell?" she argued at last reasonably. "I might."

"Oh, well—*fond*!" he revised, and it was evident that he was anxious not to be deprived by a mere quibble of her counsels. "I only mean you won't go and want to *marry* me, will you?"

II

THE young woman on the wall regarded him with a certain reserve.

"You don't allow, then," she suggested in a spirit of detached enquiry, "for there ever being anyone else?"

"But of course I do," he rejoined simply. "I allow for everything. Didn't I tell you I'm an author? My name's Richard Vane. You don't know it, I see. No. But you will."

She avoided with some dexterity the thin ice of comment.

"Mine's Vivien Otwey, and *nobody* knows it," she confided ruefully. "What sort of an author are you?"

"All sorts—novelist, dramatist, essayist, and (the whole being greater than its parts) poet. But, as I was saying, although I always allow for there being someone else, the plain fact is that, as soon as I come along—" his gesture, half dismayed, half amused, indicated a rule altogether without exception. "However—" with a smile he committed himself yet once more to a reckless optimism, and at the same time allowed her to see that he had guessed her little secret—"you *will* try to make him last, won't you?"

She hesitated. Her eyes glanced laughter and charming invitation at him.

"But I do like you," she objected, with a touch of shy wistfulness.

"Yes, I know. But you mustn't. I'm—I'm taboo."

"Yes. Of course." She ceased suddenly to dally on the borders of forbidden primrose paths. "And so am I, you know. Miss Otwey regrets that a previous engagement—" she gave a little sigh of acquiescence.

"Oh, *rather*," he assured her with relief. "So may I tell you about my engagement now?"

"All right."

"Well, then, you see. I like girls; *of course* I like girls—within reason. Only reason, for me, stops short of marrying them. I've a lot of work to get through in the next ten or fifteen years, and—well, the plain fact is I don't want to marry for as far ahead as I can see. At the same time, of course, I enjoy being in love; I find it perfectly easy, and most agreeable and stimulating to the poetic and creative faculties

to fall in love. I began by doing it with girls—just ordinary, unattached girls, you understand—and it was nearly fatal to me. They expected me to marry them, and so did their relatives. None of them understood that what I needed was simply an ideal—a *really* impossible she, inaccessible as the stars; somebody who would receive my roses and rapture without at once construing them into an offer to share my garden and my fountain-pen. For the trouble with women, I have found, is that they are *not* uncertain, coy and hard to please; on the contrary, I please them without an effort, I make certain of them without wanting to. So, next, I thought things would go better if I picked out girls who were already engaged to be married—girls irrevocably bespoke. But they didn't; they went worse. I got into trouble with their—*their* bespeakers for putting my finger into other people's pies, and with the girls themselves for not putting it in far enough and hooking out the plum. From this it was obvious that the case of the married would be the case of the engaged over again, only intensified; and not being a villain, as you can see, I stopped short at the engaged. In fact, I had really given up hope; nothing seemed even moderately safe. But then—there was Una! Can I be blamed," he demanded, hovering as usual between laughter and vexation, "for supposing that I was safe with *Una?*"

"I don't know," she reminded him. "You were going to tell me."

"Oh, of course; you don't know who *Una is*," he remembered. "Well, she's the only child of James Mansell—of the Mansell millions, you know. A few months ago journalism took me to her father's house, and her father took me into his dining-room for lunch, and at lunch I was lost. *Una* was there." He relapsed into reverie.

"And you fell in love?" she prompted, laughing a little incredulously.

He started. "No, no!—not any more than usual, that's to say, I'm in love with *you*, for that matter. You're like a dryad perched up there with your tan-

gled hair and your bubbling brook of a laugh. Only of course I daren't say so. But with *Una*—well, I let myself *go*, you see."

"Oh, but why?" she enquired, with the quickness of jealousy.

"Why? Because, of course, I felt absolutely confident of safety for once—protected, as I thought, by my disgraceful financial inadequacy. Imagine it! How could I be in danger there, of all places? Wasn't I obviously a fortune-hunter if I aspired to *Una*? And if *Una* stooped to me, couldn't I depend on her parent jolly well seeing that she didn't get me?—Yet I wasn't safe."

He sighed reminiscently.

"If *Una*," he pursued, "were ever so cruel as to say to her father, 'I want the moon,' Mr. Mansell would never get over the deadly blow to his financial pride when he found that wasn't on the market. But she didn't. She said instead, 'I want a poet;' and, if you will believe me, it has been her father's pleasure to buy me for her—to indulge her in a whim that for sheer extravagant uselessness, he reckons delightedly, she has never equalled. How could I foresee such an appalling possibility? The very measure of my moneylessness is the measure of my fascination for Mr. Mansell, you see. Anybody, he argues, observing that he has been able to afford *me* for *Una*, will be convinced that there is simply nothing he cannot afford. So I am a millionaire's darling—the last sign and seal of his millionairishness—his unmistakable intimation to the world that he has millions to burn. It has been hellish, I can tell you—ever since I realized it."

He canvassed her face for sympathy, but she withheld it.

"Miss Mansell," she said distantly, "didn't seem to me at all the sort of girl to do her own proposing."

"Her own proposing? Of course she didn't—or I could have refused her. Nobody did any proposing; that's the point. It—it wasn't considered necessary; it was just taken for granted. Haven't I been telling you that I let

myself go? And so I could do nothing. For, of course, I did tell Una that I adored her; I told her quite often; it was so glorious to be able at last to tell a lovely girl one adored her without running the slightest risk of having to marry her. You can see that, can't you?" he implored.

But she would not say that she could see it.

"You seem to have made her believe very thoroughly," she remarked with significance, "that you adored her."

"Oh, because she won't disbelieve it even now, you mean? Yes, but you've helped me to understand why that is. Of course she won't disbelieve it—now you mention it! Is it likely?—since she happens to be young and pretty and a dear, as well as rich, and her rejected suitors strew the ancestral halls of a dozen counties. Only none of them have happened to be poets, so she doesn't understand me. But she has heard that poets are peculiar about money, and she thinks—by jove, yes, that's it!—that all I have said only means I am peculiar about *her* money to the point of having a prejudice against sharing it. And, while determined not to yield to my poetic scruples and delicacies, she is thoroughly enjoying them. They are part of what she wanted—of the object, ornamental though useless, that has been bought for her. She doesn't love me any more than I love her, but I'm still a novelty to her. She never had a poet before, and she wants to watch the works go round. I've tried to escape her and I've failed; you heard how utterly I failed. She hasn't an idea that what I've said three thousand times is true. So she has gone away—not, as I hoped, with indignation and outraged pride and the reverberations of everlasting farewells, but with the deadly feminine passion of protection, the determination to save me from my unpractical self, to do what *she* knows is best for me by marrying me and taking care of me forever afterward. Do you mean to tell me you have any way of combating *that*?"

He paused, challenging her with tragic

eyes that yet danced to the hazards of his temperament and situation.

"Yes." She accepted the challenge easily. "When we met," she reminded him, "you referred to a proverb; quite a good proverb, as far it goes. It is best to be off with the old love before you are on with the new—if possible. Only sometimes it isn't possible; sometimes there's no means of being off with the old love except being on with the new."

She waited, to let that take effect.

"So, if you like," she added presently. "I'll be the new."

He made a quick, defensive movement, and shook his head at her.

"I say, you know—I!" he admonished persuasively. "Now didn't you promise me—?"

"Of course, I only mean I'd help you by *pretending* to be the new," she assured him demurely. "Don't you believe me? Oh, well, if you'd rather not—there was a rustle, ominous of departure, in the leaves above his head.

"No—no!" He hung in harassment between the undeniable Scylla of Una and the almost equally inevitable Charybdis of his companion.

"If only you'll stick to it," he begged, searching her face for signs of a resolution that it was evident he did not find there. "But you won't; I know you won't. You'll go and get fond of me in spite of yourself, and then you'll be angry or hurt or something because *I've* not changed. We'd better drop it, you know."

He looked forlornly down the path that had (but so temporarily) swallowed up Una.

"What is it exactly," he capitulated weakly, "that you propose, then?"

"Only that I should open the garden gate," she soothed and heartened him, "and that you should walk in and be compromised. It won't take long. I'm all alone here just at present, except for my old nurse and the servants. And the scandal of us will be a perfect and immediate godsend to the village. It will spread like influenza and reach Miss Mansell in no time. In a week, I

prophecy, you'll be free. Coming? We'll have lunch under the cedar and leave the gate open, so as to be in full sight of anyone coming along the path. I generally do, anyhow, because this view's so jolly, isn't it? Like a switch-back in heaven."

He looked again, but without enthusiasm, at the beautiful, undulating line of the trees, that was followed by the ribbon of the path. Then he roused.

"Lunch," he echoed longingly. "I say—I am hungry!"

III

"So they've gone." Richard Vane concluded his recital buoyantly. "And no hearts broken. Vivien, you're a witch! Your estimate of a week erred ridiculously on the side of caution, and they've gone after four days." His relief found expression in a sort of chant. Shunted me, bag and dilapidated baggage, and gone. Shaken the dust of me off their golden slippers, and gone. Consigned me to penniless perdition and gone, gone, gone! How can I ever thank you? I owe it all to you."

She made no reply, and he glanced up at her with sudden apprehension. They were seated, according to their custom (although now all necessity for it had lapsed) under the cedar, and the gate into the woods was open. He, on the ground at her feet, had his back to it; she was gazing over his head at the switchback of the path. Presently she gave a sigh, and leaned back in her chair. Far away, on the last crest of the switchback, a tiny figure had come into view. It walked toward them, and was gradually lost to sight in the succeeding valley.

"What are you thinking?" Richard asked uneasily.

Her expression was enigmatical.

"That even gratitude was not in the bond," she replied; and added after a moment, with the faintest inflection of irony, "So now you ride away?"

He stirred uncomfortably; his worst fears were realized.

"There you go—making me feel a

cad," he complained. He looked up at her despondently. "Didn't I tell you how it would be?"

"No—no," she promised tremulously. "I'm not asking *that* of you, Richard, truly. I know you can't m-marry me."

Out of the valley and on to the next crest of the path came the approaching figure; it was now distinguishable as a man.

"Only"—her fingers fastened nervously on his nearest shoulder—"oh, Richard, I can't bear it!"

"Ah, come now!" he urged. "It isn't as bad as all that yet, you know. Why—hang it—it *can't* be, after *only four* days! You're making me feel a beast, Vivien. I oughtn't to have let you help me out about Una; I knew all the time I oughtn't. I wish you'd never seen me."

"No—no!" she repeated convulsively. "Because it *is* better to have loved and lost than—"

"Vivien!" He groaned in genuine distress.

She glanced at him timidly.

"Then you do mind—just a little?" she ventured.

"Mind? That last infirmity of sentimental balderdash? That Victorian trickle of saccharinity? *Mind!*"

"I—I meant about me."

"Oh, you!" He patted her hand on his shoulder encouragingly. "Of course I mind about you. But, my dear child, you will be sensible, won't you? You know I'm most awfully fond of you. I wouldn't go away if it weren't for your sake. But it wouldn't be fair to stay, would it? Only, if I could marry *anybody*, Vivien dear, it would be you—"

"I wonder how many girls you've said that to?" she interjected, with sudden spirit.

His ingenuous flush betrayed him as a self-plagiariarist.

"It isn't fair of you to go on like this," he said hurriedly. "You knew I didn't want to marry anybody; I told you so. Didn't I?"

"Yes," she agreed dully.

"Well, then!" he cajoled. "Let's be

jolly again as we've been for the last four days."

"We can't," she said stonily. "Not to-day. That's what I've been trying to tell you."

"We can't?" he asked in surprise. "Why?"

She withdrew her eyes from the park. The approaching figure was considerably nearer now, and it was possible to see that he was unusually tall and broad.

"Because I've made him last," she said.

Then, seeing by his expression that he did not recognize the phrase as his own, she explained with a touch of panic haste,

"Oh, Richard, don't you remember my telling you there was someone else?—and you asking me to make him last? Well, I have."

"Really?" He was enormously relieved. "But that's ripping of you! Tell me all about him."

"There isn't time."

"My dear, I'm not riding away to-day!"

"No. But he's coming."

"Coming? Coming where?"

"Here. To-day."

"The deuce he is," he murmured interestedly, and straightened himself. "Who is he, then?"

"The dramatist I told you about—whose play I was reading. Oh, don't ask so many questions! I tell you, there isn't time. He'll be here in a minute or two now; he—he's just over that second dip in the path."

The young man followed her eyes and beheld emptiness. He looked incredulous.

She twisted her fingers nervously. "He is, I tell you! And you must help me, Richard—you must. Because I can't be engaged to him now; I won't marry him. You must tell him."

"I?"

The young man at last got a grasp of the impending situation, and disliked the look of it.

"Now, my dear, be reasonable," he urged anxiously. "What on earth would be the good of your being off with this

old love when there isn't the remotest chance of—of a new? Don't do anything rash, Vivien, that you'll regret later on. Wait a week or two, at least. Then, when I've gone away and you've thought it over, if you still feel your engagement's a mistake, why, break it off. But not now."

"Yes, now." She tightened her fingers on his shoulder. "Because I can't do it myself, Richard—I daren't! You don't know him. And I helped you. Surely, surely you'll help me in return?"

"But what can I do?" he objected.

"You can tell him I can't marry him. Oh, can't you tell him I'm engaged to you? That would make him believe it."

"No doubt." His eyes wavered once more between dismay and amusement. "Only—forgive my labouring the point—I'm not engaged to you."

"Of course not. I won't hold you to it. The minute he has gone I'll release you."

She sighed.

"If you can *make* him go," she added, unhelpfully.

"Oh, as for that!" he assured her.

"Then you will? Please, Richard!"

His smile was uneasy.

"It sounds all right, of course, put that way," he admitted with reluctance. "Only"—he nerved himself to frankness—"well, look here, Vivien! Suppose you're tempted to stick to me afterwards? I should be in a jolly awkward position, shouldn't I? Who's going to believe that our engagement was only a sham?"

"I will," she promised earnestly.

"Truly I won't stick to you, Richard." Her voice trembled. "Oh, don't you see how it is? You're a poet, surely you understand? I don't expect you to love or marry me. Only—only once we have found the best, we can never put up with the second-best again, can we? And so I can't be engaged to *him*; I won't be engaged to anyone—or marry anyone."

He stood up—moved, although not surprised.

"My dear," he said compassionately, "it *would* have been better if you'd never

known me. But—yes, I understand. All right; I'll do it."

He turned. The newcomer had just reached the end of the switchback, and was on the level stretch of path that run up to the garden gate.

Richard Vane was suddenly agitated in his turn.

"But I say, Vivien—he's rather like—surely he's not—you don't mean to say it's—Mackery?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Well, but you called him"—he checked at the inadequacy of the label—"you called him a dramatist!"

"And isn't he?"

"Yes, of course, but—*Mackery!*"

He flushed; it was evident that his youth was still joined to a few idols, and that high among them stood the man who was nearly at the gate.

"Vivien!"—he was shaken out of his mood of compassion for her by the unexpected greatness of his victory—"you don't mean you really want to throw him over?"

"Oh, Richard!" Her lips quivered. "You're not trying to get out of it, are you? I tell you I *won't* marry him."

"Hullo!" Mackery, swinging the gate shut behind him, announced himself easily, and she jumped up.

"Remember!" she murmured. "You've promised."

IV.

RICHARD VANE saw her folded in a large embrace, and then guided (with every hypocritical appearance of snuggling happily against Mackery's waistcoat) towards the cedar again. But as she reached it he could not avoid the urgent demand in her eyes. She was beseeching him to keep his promise, although she had not the courage to give him any help.

Moreover, it was clearly now or never. Already Mackery was looking at him over her head—quite amiably, yet as if his presence were singularly incomprehensible.

He approached the two of them.

"This lady, sir," he said, with an odd

weakness in his voice, "has entrusted me with her wishes on a matter of importance. I—I had rather have delivered them to any man than you, but, as there is no help for it, I must tell you that Miss Otwey desires to be released from her engagement to you."

"Heh?" said Mackery, a little absently.

The head upon his waistcoat suddenly burrowed further into it, and a choking sound proceeded from the neighbourhood of his right-hand pocket. He looked down at it.

"Say that again, young man, will you?" he ordered thoughtfully.

But of this dignified feat the young man felt himself incapable.

"Miss Otwey has changed her mind, sir," he paraphrased briefly. "She no longer wishes to marry you."

"Oh, she doesn't, doesn't she?" said Mackery slowly.

"And what," he added reasonably, "have you to do with the matter?"

"Noth—that is, I—the lady does me the honour to return my affection."

"You mean *you* wish to marry her?"

"Yes, sir," agreed Richard unhappily.

Mackery studied his face for a minute. Then, as though it were a book of reference and had given him the key to some other work, he detached the head that clung to his waistcoat and tilted it backwards.

"What have you been up to, Squirrel?" he enquired placidly.

"Squirrel!" In the midst of his sudden uneasiness Richard Vane was yet capable of feeling a pang of delight in the name. Why had *he* never thought of calling her Squirrel?

Vivien Otwey, now held at arm's length, bubbled into her delicious laughter.

"Only making him fit to be a husband to somebody some day," she protested.

The next instant Richard saw her involved in a physical struggle with Mackery, and he stumbled—rather ineffectually, because he was preoccupied with her remark—to her protection.

He was too late. For it seemed that the article under dispute between them

had been her left hand, and now Mackery had secured it and was flattening it against his own palm.

"Where is it?" he demanded.

With her free hand she searched a pocket and produced—after several objects which were taken from her and dropped onto the grass—a ring. Mackery gravely invested her third finger with it, smacked the hand to which the finger belonged, and tossed it from him. Then he looked at Richard.

"That's how the land lies, you see," he explained half apologetically, half confidentially, wholly as man to man.

"But I'm afraid she must have been—" he hesitated, seeking some unwounding phrase.

"Camouflaging the scenery," suggested Vivien, with her face laid again sideways against Mackery's person, and one mischievous eye on Richard, "for his good."

But Richard was incapable for yet another moment of seeing with certainty how the now uncamouflaged land lay.

"Do you mean—she's *yours*, sir?" he asked incredulously.

"Oh, no," Mackery corrected. "She's her own. Like the rest of us. But we're married—yes. She's Evelyn Clare, you know."

She was Evelyn Clare!—planet of the comedy stage, whom he had always been going to see—when he had time; and he was John Mackery, leader and hope of the new drama. Richard Vane had a forlorn and insignificant sensation of being about ten years old. But he combated it vigorously. After all, there must be a hitch somewhere. Everybody knew that neither Evelyn Clare nor John Mackery was married.

"Indeed, sir?" he said cautiously. "Please believe, at any rate, that I—that this remote neighbourhood knows the lady only as Miss Otway."

"Of course—of course," Mackery agreed, accommodating him courteously. "The fact is, you see, we were married only six weeks ago, and very quietly, to avoid fuss. Directly afterwards I was called unexpectedly to America on business. Meanwhile, my wife came here;

but she wanted privacy, and if she'd come in my name she wouldn't have got it, and if she'd come in *her* name—her stage name—she wouldn't have got it. So she just came in her own name—the one she was born with, you know."

Yes; Richard knew now. His eyes blazed in a white face. He was silent only because he dared not yet trust his voice with the words that were leaping and straining to scorch Vivien Otway who was Evelyn Clare who was Mackery's wife.

Mackery was studying him again thoughtfully.

"He seems a nice boy," he remarked enquiringly to his wife, as though they were alone.

"He is a very nice boy," she replied in the same manner. "So nice that his charm was in a fair way to be the ruin of him. Nobody had ever said him nay, or—or spanked him and put him in the corner. It wasn't good for him."

Mackery nodded, his eyes were still on Richard. "Yes, but all the same—you've really *hurt* him, Squirrel," he said with disapproval.

"I've not!" She swung round, her back against the wall of Mackery. "Richard!—have I? You say you're a poet; you say you want the truth. Now we shall see! You don't love me, and I know it; well, I don't love you, and I've fooled you, and now *you* know it. Are you going to pretend, because of it, that you've a grievance—that I've really hurt you, and so go away with your head in the air? Or are you capable of seeing that what I've hurt is only your conceit—which needed to be hurt, and which (if you're worth anything) you ought to be *glad* to have hurt? Think! Didn't you ask me not to fall in love with you? And I haven't. Didn't you ask me to make John Mackery last? And I have. Didn't you say you wanted a really impossible she, inaccessible as the stars? Well, here I am! So now—which do you *really* love best, the truth or yourself?"

She flung her arms wide, and then dropped them, challenging him, demanding an answer.

And it did not come. He stood motionless, and although he stared at her it was blankly, blindly.

But John Mackery, because he knew what that gaze meant, exhorted her, with a pressure of his hands on her shoulders, to be patient. She understood, and nodded very slightly in response. For Richard Vane was learning; under the lash of her challenge he was applying himself painfully to a new branch of youth's lesson of self-knowledge. If he shirked it, if he ended by evading the task because it was hard, and wrapped himself in some comfortable mental sleeping-bag of dignity or pique—he was dross. But if he could face the truth, even when it was a truth so uncomfortable to himself, if he could bear to learn—which “always feels at first as if you had lost something”—then, indeed, he might prove to be of that precious enduring metal out of which artists are laboriously hammered by life.

He emerged from abstraction at last,

and his colour fluctuated like a girl's. But he did not hesitate. Coming close up to them, he suddenly—with a gesture that his youth, his charm and his sincerity robbed of unnaturalness—dropped on one knee and kissed her hand.

“Yes,” he said simply, “I deserved it. Good-bye. And I beg your pardon.”

He was on his feet again in an instant, and had turned to go. But another hand held him back in a friendly, approving grip.

“A nice boy,” observed Mackery, as though he were not there.

“A very nice boy,” corroborated Mackery's wife, in the same manner.

“Come and see us as soon as we get back to town,” decided Mackery abruptly, offering him the delectable freedom of their house.

“Yes, Richard, do,” Mackery's wife approved—and included him, by her smile, in the yet more delectable freemasonry of art.



Martyr of the Lowlands

By Dennison Varr

HE was as fat as Fatty Arbuckle. He stood in the doorway facing the gang of cut-throats.

“If you enter here,” he cried, “it will be only over my dead body!”

To a man the gang slunk away. They had no stomach for mountain climbing.



A BACHELOR is a souvenir of some woman who found a better one at the last minute.



The Shop Window

By Hal Stanley

I HAVE gazed into terrible eyes.

The inside of the noonday stream of toilers moved adhesively past the shop windows. A druggist exploited experimental cures. A men's furnisher mobilized blood-red neckties. A mad hatter advertised headgear. I stopped where a hardware concern displayed tools. There were hammers with shapely hickory handles, in the window; silver plated steel ratchet braces with mahogany heads; shovels; rakes; crowbars; railroad picks; spading forks; compact blacksmith forges; grindstones with ball bearings; jack screws; anvils; and Stillson wrenches with relentless jaws. A wasted man stood beside me. He was obviously of the unemployed. I looked from his worn shoes to his frayed cuffs; from his faded coat and shabby necktie to his pitiful face. He was staring at the beautiful tools—an immaculate company, glistening in the sun. Suddenly, with a start he turned from the tools to me.

I have gazed into terrible eyes.



LOVE comes like a fairy tripping along in the moonlight, and goes like a sailor being thrown out of a saloon.



HAPPINESS, alas, is born to perish. Even the longest kiss doesn't last half as long as a cold in the head.



WHEN a woman begins to try new milliners it is a sign that she is growing old.



La Vie Chère

By Gaston Roupnel

C'ÉTAIT au temps, au bon temps, où on vivait sur la terre nonchalante sans rien de plus méchant à y redouter que les apaches et les microbes. On s'arrangeait d'eux avec quelques gendarmes et des médicaments ; et on vivait heureux sur terre, comme si le roi de Prusse n'y avait jamais existé. C'était le temps, l'heureux temps, où on croyait fini icibas le règne des violents, et où on parlait de peuples rivaux ou de peuples frères comme si c'étaient les mêmes foules douces. C'était le temps, le bon temps, où la mégère ne déblatérerait pas, et où l'impôt sur le revenu était encore un simple motif d'éloquence. C'était le temps, le bon temps, où le beurre et les œufs n'étaient pas encore une aristocratie du garde-manger . . . où ils avaient des mœurs populaires, et où ils fréquentaient, sans en rougir ou en rancir, la table de la simple bourgeoisie. C'était le temps, le bon temps, où le gigot ne coûtait pas encore les yeux de la tête, et où les côtelettes n'étaient pas un mythe perdu dans le mystère intérieur du mouton.

En ce temps-là, donc, Gavarot, le bon Gavarot, acheta des terres. Il fit cela parce qu'il faut bien faire quelque chose. Je parie qu'il y a des gens qui vont s'offenser de le voir revenir encore, ce Gavarot, ce bon Gavarot ! . . . Car c'est comme cela : il y a des caractères pointus que la seule réapparition de la bonté humaine agace ! Et Gavarot était la bonté faite homme, archi-homme ! . . . Et quand un homme, un vrai homme, se met à être brave homme, il n'y a pas de raison pour que ça finisse ! . . . Et Gavarot, lui, ne finissait pas. Rien qu'à vous voir, sa grasse figure heureuse s'épanouissait comme un

marché aux fleurs. Il avait des bajoues comme des cloches ; et son bon gros rire carillonnait là-dedans, comme si ça y avait toujours été la noce.

On l'aimait et on le plaisantait, ce Gavarot. Il aimait surtout à être plaisanté à cause de ses vignes. Il en parlait avec joie, comme de petites folles qui passaient leur vie en cotillon vert et à grimper les coteaux :

— Ah ! elles font enrager, disait-il. Elles ont la tête dure et pleine de cailloux. Et puis, gourmandes ! . . . Elles mangeraient du fumier gros comme elles . . . si on les écoutait.

. . . Pauvre Gavarot ! Il en est bien revenu de tout cela ! Le petit homme l'a mis au pas.

* * *

Le petit homme est un produit de la guerre. Au temps jadis, il y a trois ou quatre ans par exemple, le petit homme aurait joué dans le pays un rôle déprécié. Il aurait pu faire un quatrième à la manille ; mais rien que de toucher une charrue, il aurait déshonoré un train de culture. Mais, depuis cela, les braves gens qui entretenaient le perpétuel labeur du village sont partis à la guerre. Le petit homme, lui, est resté, tout fier d'être un homme, et de pouvoir parler tout son aise charrues et moissons. On fut bien obligé de le prendre au sérieux. Il parla de piocher, de défricher et de dégrimonner, avec un air à débroussailler toute l'Afrique. Cette Grosse bête à bon Dieu de Gavarot fut sa dupe. Le petit homme s'imposa à lui ; il entra dans sa vie comme chez lui ; et il fit du cœur de Gavarot sa tête de Turc.

— Surtout, lui fit-il, ne vous inquiétez plus de rien ! Nous serons trois à tra-

vailler pour vous d'arrache-pied. Il y aura la terre d'abord. Puis il y aura le soleil, qui mûrit les denrées. Et, enfin, il y aura moi. Et des trois, comptez surtout sur moi! S'il y a un feignant . . . ce sera ou la terre, ou le soleil! . . . pas moi! . . .

Gavarot se vit tout de suit avec du blé plein ses champs, et du vin plein sa cave. Le petit homme lui promit des merveilles:

— Je vous vois le pain, les pommes de terre, les haricots, un cochon, une vache, des poules, des lapins, du lait et de la crème: tout cela sorti seulement de quelques coups de charrue, ou venu par quelques *siaux* d'eau grasse! . . . Voyez un peu ce que ce serait s'il fallait fabriquer ça de toutes pièces! . . .

Seulement, pour faire toutes ces merveilles, il fallait monter tout un train de culture.

— Il nous faut un cheval, monsieur . . . si insignifiant qu'il soit! . . .

Le petit homme acheta des sements. La bourse de Gavarot s'entr'ouvrit; puis s'ouvrit tout à fait; puis se vida sans glouglou par les soins du petit homme, qui prit sa poche pour le sein de la terre éternelle:

— N'ayez pas peur, monsieur! . . . disait le petit homme. N'ayez pas peur d'ensemencer et de planter hardiment! . . . Croyez-moi, monsieur, il vaut mieux avoir son bout de champ à soi que de compter sur les trois continents! . . . Une paire des poulets, c'est plus sûr que 100 millions d'Américains! . . . Mais savez-vous bien, monsieur, que si ça continue seulement encore deux, trois hivers . . . dans deux ans d'ici . . . en Europe . . . un panier de pommes de terre sera plus qu'un roi! . . .

Il n'en fallait pas tant pour décider Gavarot. Le petit homme alla lui acheter un cheval, une grande bête aigrie et fausse, aux airs colère. Il coûtait 1.500 francs. Gavarot le trouva cher. Mais le petit homme se fâcha:

— L'eût peut-être fallu m'adresser chez l'équarisseur tout de suite?

Naturellement, le cheval prit Gavarot en grippe. Et Gavarot, qui aurait voulu profiter du cheval pour faire un peu de

carriole, fut obligé de marcher à pied plus que jamais. Pour le consoler, le petit homme acheta des poules dont il répondait:

— Ce sont des caractères à pondre tout le temps. Elles vont y aller ventre à terre! . . . Chaque bête, monsieur, c'est une centaine de déjeuners pour vous! . . .

Cependant, Gavarot trouva que l'ensemencement de ses champs ne marchait pas. Les champs avaient tous un air de broussaille effarouchée. Par-ci, par-là, un peu de terre bousculée . . . une petite comédie de charrue. Gavarot demanda où était son blé. Le petit homme se tordait:

— Vot'blé! . . . Pourquoi pas réclamer aussi déjà le boulanger? . . . Attendez donc voir un peu que ce soit poussé! . . .

Mais quand vint le temps des moissons, sur le domaine Gavarot rôdait un air de nature morte et de néant agricole. Gavarot y chercha en vain, à coups de lorgnon, la trace de ses céréales. Et le pire, c'est que le petit homme s'en irritait:

— Ça sent la ruine chez vous! . . . Auriez-vous pas placé votre argent chez les Allemands, coquin? . . .

Gavarot, du moins, pensait avoir des pommes de terre. Il avait payé pour 360 francs de sements. Le petit homme le rabroua:

— Il y a les Prussiens en France, et vous y parlez de pommes de terre! . . . Pauvre outil, va! . . .

Et comme Gavarot se plaignait que la vache n'eût pas de lait:

— Vous réclamez du lait! . . . Mais vous raisonnez comme un bidon, mon garçon! . . . Le lait! . . . Ne parlez voir plus de ça aux vaches, à l'heure actuelle! . . . C'est en souvenir des anciennes vaches, ce que vous en dites! Mais celles de maintenant ont autre chose à faire qu'à s'occuper de ces détails-là! . . .

. . . Pauvre Gavarot! . . . Dire que jadis il était bourgeois! "De quel droit? . . ." crie le petit homme, qui est enragé contre lui. Au lieu de lui arracher ses pommes de terre, il parle de

lui arracher la tête. Récemment, quand Gavarot s'inquiéta de n'avoir jamais d'œuf de ses poules, le petit homme lui riposta qu'un œuf à la coque était tout aussi bien une créature que lui.

— Et puis d'ailleurs, ajouta-t-il, faire des œufs, ce n'est pas leur idée, à ces poules! . . . Et ce qu'elles n'ont pas

dans la tête, elles ne l'ont pas non plus ailleurs! . . .

Gavarot parla aussi des lapins qu'il avait achetés dont il restait sans nouvelles. Cependant, il eut juste le temps d'apercevoir, avant qu'il fût mangé, un derrière de lapin. Le petit homme prétend que ce sont les rats qui l'ont eu. Ils ont eu la peau . . . oui! . . .



Distemper

By Phillips Russell

I AM of a mind to seek a desolate country
Where I may find a barren lake
Whose shores I shall pace in solitude,
Listening to the lap, lap
Of moody waters.

I am of a mind to go to the hills
Where I shall climb the splintered heights
Of pride; and gaining the top -
Gaze upon existence
Sardonically.

I shall withdraw to the forests
And search out a lair
Where I may lick my hurts like a dog,
Looking out through the tangle
With malevolent eyes.

There shall I lie till I am healed,
Till I am cured of my distemper;
Then shall I come back, bounding
Like a young goat
Across a pasture at sunrise.



WHEN a woman cries in the presence of man, it is either a sign that she knows she has him securely, or a sign that she has at last given him up.

The Too-Perfect Theater

By George Jean Nathan

THE professors who are indefatigable in their effort further to improve the contemporary theater seem to overlook one important thing. And this is that the theater has already been improved to a degree where—unless someone soon takes measures to check the danger—it will be irretrievably ruined. One may improve certain things so far, and no farther; and the theater is one of these. If one sought to improve George Ade's excellent "Fables in Slang" by converting them into the more substantial and exquisite English of Walter Pater one would, clearly, subvert them. Or if one sought to improve Chopin's buoyant scherzo in E, op. 54, by deepening its emotional content, or the compositions of Domenico Scarlatti by muscularizing their beautifully slight structure one would, just as clearly, devastate them. It is the same with the theater. If one seeks to improve it by taking from it all the infractions and crudities that compose its very soul, one damages it out of all recognition.

All consideration of the box-office aside, it remains that not only the first, but the highest, aim of the theater is as a showhouse. It is a showhouse whether it offers Shakespeare à la Gordon Craig or Avery Hopwood à la A. H. Woods. It is a showhouse whether it offers "L'Aiglon" or "Twin Beds." To attempt to make the theater something more than a showhouse is to attempt to make the Flonzaley Quartette the Boston Symphony Orchestra. A showhouse is essentially a showhouse; a quartette is essentially a quartette; each is good enough in its own way. Yet what do the professors seek to accom-

plish; what have they already accomplished? They have already so distorted the theater by improving it that it is today less a theater, less a house of unadulterated diversion, than an austere annex to the art gallery, the college lecture hall and the library. Its fine old youthful barbarism, its beloved old gracelessness, all the old flaws that made it dear to the heart—these all are gone from it. And in their stead have come a polish, a hard-and-fast beauty and a proximity to life that have taken from it so much of its erstwhile remote romance, its erstwhile mystery, and its erstwhile wonderful old smell.

When one went to the theater twenty-five and thirty years ago one knew that one was in a theater: and when one goes to a theater, that is obviously what one wants to know and to feel. For the theater is an escape from reality. But today, once the curtain of a dramatic theater is up, one is subconsciously uncertain whether one is in a theater or whether one is in close contact with life. Or, in a musical comedy theater, whether one is in the studio of some extraordinarily successful scene painter or in the display room of some Fifth Avenue modiste. Seeing the crude drama of other days, one was sure that one was sitting in a showhouse. Seeing the remarkably suave drama of this day, one's subconscious self is tricked and deceived. Is this the theater, it asks; is this a play, or is this life—life that I came here to avoid? When one used to see "The Romany Rye" or "The Marble Heart" or "The Corsican Brothers," one knew every minute that one was in a theater. When now one sees "Jane Clegg" or "Hindle Wakes" or

"The Easiest Way," one doesn't feel that one is peeking into a theater at romance and unreality so much as one feels that one is peeking out of a theater at life and reality.

Twenty-five years ago every effort was made to make a person feel that he was in a theater. Today every effort is made to make him forget that he is in a theater. When I used to go to the old Lyceum Theater and see a character on the stage lift a window-shade and then see the room flooded by a Daniel Frohman bunchlight with a magenta and green sunshine, I knew that I was in a theater. Now when I go to the new Lyceum Theater and see a character lift a window-shade and then see the room flooded by a Belasco fabrication with a sunlight as realistic as the real thing, I am fooled for the moment into believing that I am out of a theater and in an actual scene. And I don't relish it. Nor, I dare say, does any one else who forgets the single instance and considers the situation in its broadest sweep.

Nothing seems to me so absurd as the cry for the theater to mirror life. Life is precisely what the theater should not mirror. It should mirror fancy, illusion, hypnotic romance, impossible adventure—everything but life. It should be a world of make-believe, as it was born. It should give us not trees and moons that look real, not William Falders and Laura Murdocks that are real, but trees of shaky canvas and wiggling moons and false-whiskered Hawkshaws and theatrical Lady Gay Spankers. That is, in essence: it is the spirit of the theater, not its content, that I refer to. A circus belongs in a tent: it is not the same when it is dolled up in a Madison Square Garden. The theater and its exhibits, once glorying in their own small circus air, are rapidly becoming Madison Square Gardened. Electrical equipment developed to a point where its dawns and twilights compete with Nature's, scenic inventions that convert paint and canvas into landscapes completely deceptive, dramatists and actors who duplicate life so closely that

the illusion is too complete, auditoriums so shrewdly designed that not a trace of the old-time theater feel remains in them—all these things have contributed to a rapidly become too-perfect institution. An institution, in a word, akin to a woman who has painted, penciled, powdered, coiffed and massaged herself to the point of artificial perfection where she is less a human woman than a walking wax model.

It is doubtless this knowledge, felt if unphrased, that lies at the bottom of the artistic revolts against the theater of today, the revolts of such men as Craig and Fuchs on the scenic side, such men as Bakst and Pankok on the costume side, such men as Appia and Otto-mar Starke on the lighting side, and such men as Georg Kaiser and Jean Cocteau on the dramatic and technical side. And, further, to turn to the musical side, such men as Erik Satie and Georges Auric. Of these, Craig, of course, is the most articulate: he most clearly knows what he is driving at. Where the majority of the others feel that something is wrong, their cures have not yet been perfected: Cocteau, for example, is a mere Greenwich Villager who happens to have been born in Paris; and Bakst, though he has done some beautiful and excellent work, intrinsically a Russian Roycrofter. But Craig's eye, if not always his pen, is sure and clear. His theory is sharp, vital, unerring, even if his attempts to phrase that theory for the reading public are not always as felicitous. Give us back the theater! he cries—and soundly. It is when he employs the word beauty without a qualifying footnote that he appears sometimes to confound himself. For what Craig would bring back to the theater is not the hard, set beauty of truth but the gorgeous, liquid beauty of theatrical artificiality. He sees the theater as a great show-house, not—like the great majority of advanced theater bolsheviks—as a sort of combined Louvre, Bibliothèque Nationale and Paquin's. He sees that what it needs at the present time is a rich dose of old-fashioned castor oil to purge

it of its mechanically perfect fol-de-rols, its amazing pretenses and realisms, its confusing encroachments upon life and reality. He sees that what it needs—if it is to live and if its future is to regain all the glory of its past—is itself of yesterday seen through an imagination of today. Filter the old theater through a sieve of beauty—that is the Craig credo.

The paint and canvas room in Polonius' house in an Edmund Kean production of "Hamlet" surely looked no more to a theater audience of the last century like an actual room in an actual house than the portiered room in Polonius' house in a Craig-Stanislavski production of "Hamlet" looks to a theater audience of the present century like an actual room in an actual house. Both are purely "theater"; both are grounded in a secure theory of the theater; Craig's room is beautiful "theater" where the Kean room was ugly "theater." This is Craig's theory in simple illustration. An audience must ever be reminded that it is in a theater: that was the sound theory of Augustin Daly. An audience must ever be beautifully reminded that it is in a theater: that is the sounder theory of Craig. An audience must ever be made to forget that it is in a theater: that is the theory of the Mrs. Hornimans and Belascos, a theory akin to one which would hold that a thirsty man who rushes eagerly into a brewery with his mouth open and his tongue hanging out should be cleverly persuaded that he is in a Baptist Sunday School.

I believe in realism to a certain extent—I am by no means an impressionist patriot—but did I believe in it to the complete exclusion of everything else I should yet not be able to convince myself that it wasn't a bad thing for the theater. That way lies a theater that is kin to the poetry of Robert Service, with its idiotic and alien literality, and to the music of Raymond Hubbell, with its water-whistle imitation of birds and resined-string imitation of bull-frogs. The realistic theater is as much of an anomaly as an impressionistic laundry.

One doesn't put on a dinner jacket, fasten a boutonnière to one's lapel, hail a crooked-metred taxicab and hasten to hand a man behind a grilled window \$2.50 in order to get into a place to see something that looks very much like what one has already often seen gratis outside in one's street clothes. And, as I have several times written, the theater mood is the dinner jacket mood, whether one has on a dinner jacket or not. And, as I have also written, this theater mood may be catered to aptly and equally by a Reinhardt or an A. H. Woods, by an Antoine or a J. J. Schubert. But, whether by Max or Al, by André or Jake, whether in terms of realism, impressionism or any other ism, whether sound or unsound, good or bad—and this is the point—it must be catered to by the theater in terms of the artificial theater rather than by the theater in terms of the realistic theater. Belasco has doubtless been uniformly successful in making a lot of money out of his extravagant stage realism not, as so many believe, because of that extravagant stage realism but because his theater and auditorium are themselves twice as extravagantly unrealistic and theatrical as any of the romantic stages of his contemporaries. Belasco's theater in West Forty-fourth Street, with its lighting à la Murray's restaurant, its ankle-deep carpet, its unexpectedly encountered mirrors and general mysterious phrenologist's parlour atmosphere, counteracts whatever untheatrical realism he discloses upon its stage, and so insures no violation of the audience's theater mood. When one is in the Belasco Theater, one knows that one is in a theater, sometimes even after the curtain has gone up. When one is in the gaunt, bare Garrick Theater, at some such persuasive production as "Jane Clegg," one's active mind periodically doesn't distinguish whether one is in a theater seeing a play or in a provincial English house seeing a family's bickerings.

Does all this seem to be a contradiction of certain of my critical attitudes in the past? No matter. The fact that

my personal critical tastes at times run to things that are inimical to what are perhaps the highest interests of the theater has utterly nothing to do with the integrity of the present argument. The circumstance that I personally enjoy a good loud burlesque show more than "Plody Prosveyescheniya" doesn't necessarily mean that Jean Bedini has worked a greater benefit to the theater than Tolstoi. Nor does the circumstance that the naturalistic and realistic "Weavers" happens to be a better and theatrically more enjoyable play than the symbolic and impressionistic "Death of Tintagiles." Some of the very things that are least to our tastes are the best for us: regular hours, a light diet, a hard pillow, Hunyadi Janos. And some of the very things that are most to our tastes are the worst for the theater: the drama of Hauptmann, the naturalistic acting of the Barnowski direction, the lighting of Belasco, the architecture of the Little Theater.

The stage is properly not the playground of the Zolas and the Dreisers, but of the Hewletts and the Cabells. It is the church of human joys and human forgetfulness. It is the eternal boy of the arts. It is never, and never must be, the professor. Let us have back its old canvas mountains that bend in the middle when the villain leans against them, its old proscenium arch of pea-green canvas foliage for summer and winter scenes alike, its old tin crowns and wooden swords and papier-maché locomotives. *They* are the soul of the theater.

II

GOING to a theater to see a dramatic play at the height of summer has always seemed to me much like going to a lawn fête to drink lemonade at the height of winter. But, no work, no beer—so what is a man to do? Twice, therefore, have I offered myself upon the altar: first, to expose an ear to Mr. George V. Hobart's dramatization of the late David Graham Phillips' "Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise," and second-

ly, to a Margaret Mayo and Aubrey Kennedy masterpiece called "Seeing Things."

The Hobart effort is a particularly magnificent specimen. It faithfully preserves everything of the Phillips novel save the plot, form, style, flavour, psychology, characterizations, philosophy, descriptive force, photographic attributes, and sense. This novel, true enough, was perhaps the poorest thing that the gifted Phillips left to posterity, but the Hobart dramatization meticulously seizes upon each of its poorest qualities and, by the exercise of a dazzling and matchless virtuosity, raises each to a Himalayan height of balderdash. The result is an old Bowery melodrama that needs only a few bloodhounds, a comic Irish policeman and a detective disguised as a Chinaman to make it a classic.

Susan, in the Hobart ruby, is properly deflowered in Act I, Scene 1, under the combined influence of a cerise and lavender moonlight, four musicians from the orchestra who have sneaked up through the trap-door and stationed themselves in the wings, and an actor in a Tuxedo that is two sizes too tight for him. Great is the indignation when the family learns the news, and loud the sermons from the fat *cabot* playing the cruel papa, the while poor Susan hangs her coco in shame. Come! cries the fat one, pack your suit-case! Why? chokes Susan. There is only one way to save you now! booms the fat boy. Only one way? asks Susan, evidently somewhat dubious of the fat one's talents as a mathematician. Yes, only one way, says the fat boy, and that is to get you married to the first man that'll have you—at once!

In the next scene, the fat actor has located a drunk who declares his willingness to take on Susan for \$1,000. A ceremony is hastily performed; everyone clears out; and the harassed heroine finds herself alone with the brute: also a very fat actor. This second fat actor now gives Susan a lascivious eye, locks the door and proceeds to the usual business of chasing her

around the room. But, after a large amount of perspiration due perhaps less to passion and fear respectively than to Lee Shubert's carelessness in forgetting to install an ice-cooling system in the Forty-fourth Street Theater, Susan makes her escape, still—thank God—almost a virgin.

We next encounter Susan on a steamboat on the Ohio river, with the leading man of the traveling theatrical troupe currently making the nasty looks at her. But from this lewd one our Volstead virgin once again manages to escape, and presently we find her in a park in Cincinnati, a drop "in one" such as they used to employ in the old twenties while they were setting the big scene showing the inside of the hook-and-ladder station. No one, so far as I recall, makes a set for Susan in this scene, but then it only lasts three minutes. Susan is dead broke and now takes up her home in a cheap boarding house. Here she meets a poor girl dying of consumption, and several bejewelled ladies of joy. The contrast between the poor dying girl and the opulent pleasure *filles* hits Susan hard and, as the curtain comes down, she lifts a voice to the effect that she, too, is going to take a hack at the fancy life.

Back again to the park drop "in one" where we behold Susan, her mind changed, crying bitterly. Comes along a man who essays Susan anew but Susan shudders and bids him begone. Comes then another man whom Susan saves from being blackjacked by an itinerant thug and who offers her a job in his department store. It is in this bazaar that we next encounter Susan, posing as a modiste's model. A traveling salesman played by a third fat actor is the coveter at this stage of the proceedings. But no sooner has this fatty declared his evil intentions than Susan's original seducer appears upon the scene and also puts in his application. This was too much for me, so I went home to bed.

But, you say, if I so eloquently urge a return to the theater smell of earlier days, what more than this do I want?

To which I reply: there are smells and smells.

The Mayo-Kennedy nugget is a wheezing attempt to poke fun at the current Conan Doyle-Oliver Lodge goose-chase. An act and one half of it was enough to convince me that the erstwhile talented Miss Mayo is rapidly going to seed. Season after season she trots out the same old bag of tricks. These, upon their first revealment ten years ago, were highly amusing but the endless repetition of them has become deadly. Further, where Miss Mayo once drew more or less sharp characterizations, she now writes mere Broadway ingénues and actors.

By way of relief from such stuff—and by way of getting drama without going into a hot theater—I have turned to the manuscript of Eugene O'Neill's new full-length play, "Gold," which is announced for production some time during the coming winter. What I find here is an excellent piece of work, in many respects superior to the author's "Beyond the Horizon." Of all the American plays due for production this coming year that I have read in manuscript, it seems to me the most ingeniously written, the most searchingly executed and, on all counts, the most important. Out of what is intrinsically a mere melodramatic fable of desert island and treasure trove, O'Neill has fetched a remarkably vivid and poignant tragedy. The characters live; their drama lives; and all is rich in overtones. In this work, O'Neill lifts himself still another rung above all his American contemporaries.

III

WHY it is that in the middle of summer a music show theater always seems cooler than a dramatic theater, I don't know. Surely there is no sound reason for the phenomenon. Surely the spectacle of a music show cast of one hundred men and women gallumphing about the stage half dead with perspiration should not be so cooling as the spectacle of a dramatic cast of six or seven persons lolling calmly in chairs

and upon couches. It is one of the insoluble riddles, along with why a man with his linen collar off always looks warmer than a man with his linen collar on, even though both may be equally cool. It cannot be that the hotter the object one looks at the cooler one feels oneself. If this were true, the sight of a blazing grate would cause one to shiver. So let us give it up, and turn to the shows themselves.

This year's Ziegfeld "Follies," as usual, leads all the summer exhibits in taste and delicacy. Several of the scenes, notably one of the tableaux posed by Ben Ali Haggin, are very beautiful and the customary Ziegfeld sense of quality is constantly evident. This is nowhere more evident than in the knack that Ziegfeld has of taking vaudeville performers and of removing from them every vestige of brash vaudeville air. But what of the girls? As I have been remarking for the last year or two, what has happened to Ziegfeld's quondam virtuosity? True, the fellow is still able to take a girl with a face like a chromo of grandma and frock and hat her so that she passes the amateurs as a Corona Corona, but the cunning talent no longer succeeds in outwitting the connoisseurs. Save in one or two instances, the present display of Venuses is not much above the customary display in Monti's Operetten-theater in Berlin. Ziegfeld is still the leader of music show producers: there has yet appeared no man seriously to challenge him: but in the past three seasons he has failed to equal the pretty girl record of the last Gest show atop the Century Theater. With Marilyn Miller, Ann Pennington, Martha Mansfield and the like out of the present "Follies," the least our friend can do is to bring Kathlene Martyn down from the roof.

George White's "Scandals of 1920" has in the little Pennington the most amusing dancer on the local music show stage. There is a suggestion of burlesque and self-criticism in the girl's dancing that adds to its winning quality. She combines the comic spirit with

unusual grace: there is no one quite like her: I would rather watch her dance than a half dozen Fokinas. The estimable M. Bickel, as I wrote last month, is also in the troupe, but is given very little to do. A sad waste of a first-rate comique. The rest of the show is not much. There are one or two funny moments, but the Ziegfeld touch is lacking.

The Ed Wynn "Carnival," which has been on view for some time but which I didn't get to see until a few weeks ago, is Wynn and nothing else. This Wynn is a serviceable clown. In the present show he repeats all of his old dodges but some of these, such as the rapid calculator and violin playing acts, are still highly diverting. For the rest, the exhibit is the usual thing wherein, in front of a scene showing the Sphinx in a green and purple light, an actor dressed up in gold beaded pajamas sings "Where the Nile breeze blows, Oh my Sahara rose." The girls of the chorus were doubtless selected by Goldberg, the cartoonist.

The new Winter Garden show is named "Cinderella on Broadway" and, in addition to a well staged and very handsomely mounted scene called "The Silver Slipper Ball," is noteworthy for a lyric one line of which alludes to "beautiful women fair." The best part of the show is the dancing; the poorest, as usual, the dialogue supplied by Harold Atteridge. The only thing worse than Atteridge's dialogue are his lyrics. In the present exhibition, the gentleman's chief triumph in humour is a dialogue wherein A says to B: "I know where we can get a drink if we have the dust"; wherein B replies: "I have the dust"; and wherein A thereupon cleverly rejoins: "Then come on, let's dust." The sooner the Winter Garden employs a librettist whose wit is pitched a trifle higher than bringing one character to remark "That star is Mars" and a second to inquire "But where's par's?", the happier it will be for that otherwise diverting music hall. It has the colour, the swing, the movement, the life; fully half a dozen of its chorus

girls have thin legs; one is privileged the puffing of a stogie in one's contemplation of the scene; its runway remains the very essence of the music show spirit; but its words are the words of Trophonius.

But let us have, here as in the instance of these other shows, a slice of constructive criticism. Why not get Rip over from France, let him tour the town for a few weeks and write a Parisian boulevardier's impressions in revue form? Or why not George Birmingham, who could do the job beautifully? Or, if steamer accommodations are difficult, why not our native Ring Lardner who, I understand, is eager to get his hand into the theater? Then, when this has been arranged, why not go out and bag a more likely-looking lot of girls? There are plenty to be found, and they are all vastly prettier than those these music show stages disclose. Specifically, if serious constructive criticism is desired, the dark cigarette and cigar vivandière in the hunt room at the Astor, the smaller of the flaxen-haired hat-check girls on the Waldorf roof, the brunette who takes the cards in to Frank Crowninshield, the blonde in the Hofbräu cloak room, the French candy-counter girl Evelyn in the uptown Henri's, the little page girl Anna, late of Sherry's, a recent telephone girl in the SMART SET office whose beauty so interfered with the business of promoting literature in America that she had to be fired, the comely youngster who, I am told, is the stenographer in the Selwyns' press department, the toy flapper with the bobbed black hair that one sees at all the supper dances, the slender manicure girl in the women's hair-dressing shop in West Fiftieth Street, the girl with the sealskin hair

who serves periodicals and newspapers in a hotel in West Forty-fourth Street, the Jap girl with the blue eyes in the tea-room of the Ambassador in Atlantic City . . .

IV

WHAT is written above applies to the entertainment called "Will Morrissey's Comiques" like a mustard plaster. Save for a moderately amusing lampoon of the Barrymore Holy Trinity, the dialogue of the show is of the stereotyped vaudeville flavour. The lampoon in point gets the applause of the evening and should convince the Broadway music show producer that apt travesty and pat satire of current personages and phenomena do not, as he appears to believe, spell ruin. The display of girls reveals nothing. There is not one of them one-third so attractive as, say, the check-room girl on the Ritz roof.

What is written above does not apply, however, to the function inaugurated by the Shuberts atop the Century Theater. Here, with Central Park glimmering blue-green through the open windows and with an athletic jazz band motivating a colourful and agile chorus, is a comfortable and fetching amusement chamber. These roof exhibits are among the best things that the music show theater of New York has to offer, and this particular exhibit—there are two separate shows—is not below the standard. Several of the song numbers are very well staged; a fair share of the young women are at least momentarily opera-glassable; wheeze-dialogue is shrewdly omitted; and the cane seats of the table chairs are merciful upon the caboose. All in all, an agreeable and diverting resort. I commend it to your notice.



Notes and Queries

By H. L. Mencken

I

SOME time ago, finding myself in Chicago on patriotic business, I put in an evening drinking near-beer at Hinky Dink's now ghostly *Gasthaus* with Carl Sandburg. The near-beer was very bad, but Hinky Dink was as amiable as could be, and Sandburg did a good deal of interesting talking. After a while a film came over his china-blue eyes and he began to prophesy.

"The next fifty years," he said, "will see a magnificent flowering of literature in America—in fact, of all the fine arts. The country will find itself, and begin to do great things. It will produce countless books of the first class. It will hatch geniuses by the drove. At the moment the soul of America is still inarticulate. But it will find voices innumerable. Mark my word, my boy: something big will be pulled off."

Thus the substance of the prognostication. In the matter of details, Sandburg was a good deal less sure. Two hours' cross-examination failed to drag out of him whether all this flowering would come in the West or in the East, or whether it would be a city prodigy or a country miracle. The nearer he came to specifications, in fact, the vaguer he got, but on the main point he stuck to his doctrine resolutely. I tried to break it down logically, evidentially and with plain snickers, but always in vain. A vast and unshakable earnestness was in him. The more I hemmed and hawed, the more resolutely he stuck to his vision, and the more eloquently he put it into words.

Rolling home in the moonshine afterward, it suddenly occurred to me that

I had heard the whole thing before. But where? I wondered all the next day, and all the day after, and then took the problem aboard the Broadway Limited when I returned East. A week later, idling through my library in Baltimore, I found the answer. It appeared in a volume of Emerson's essays—a book I have seldom so much as glanced at since adolescence. Here, in the famous address to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, delivered on August 31, 1837, is what I found:

Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. . . . Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp, which now flames in our zenith, astronomers announce, shall one day be the pole-star for a thousand years?

But I was still unsatisfied. Emerson appeared to have only poets in mind; Sandburg had been talking of literati of all sorts. It seemed to me that I had encountered the same sweeping prophecy before, taking in prose as well as verse. Not finding it in the remaining treatises and harangues of Emerson, I turned by chance to Walt Whitman. In "Democratic Vistas" I found what I was seeking, to wit, the grandiose vision of

a class of native authors, literatuses, far different, far higher in grade, than any yet known, sacerdotal, modern, fit to cope with our occasions, lands, permeating the whole mass of American morality, taste, belief, breathing into it a new breath of life, giving it decision, affecting politics far more than the popular superficial suffrage, with results inside and underneath the elections of Presi-

dents or Congress—radiating, begetting appropriate teachers, schools, manners, and, as its grandest result, accomplishing (what neither the schools nor the churches and their clergy have hitherto accomplished, and without which this nation will no more stand, permanently, soundly, than a house will stand without a substratum) a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States.

And out of the vision straightaway came the prognostication:

The promulgation and belief in such a class or order—a new and greater literatus order—its possibility (nay, certainty)—underlies these entire speculations. . . . Above all previous lands, a great original literature is sure to become the justification and reliance (in some respects the sole reliance) of American democracy.

Thus Whitman in 1870, following Emerson in 1837, and to be followed by Sandburg in turn in 1920. Always the same gaudy vision, the same baroque and enchanting dream! Always the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow! Moreover, Emerson was not the first to behold it. You will find almost the same benign hallucination in the essays of the elder Channing and in the "Lectures on American Literature" of Samuel Lorenzo Knapp, LL.D., the first native critic of beautiful letters—the primordial tadpole of all our later Mores, Brownells, Mabies, Brander Matthews, and other such grave and glittering fish. Knapp believed, like Whitman, that the sheer physical grandeur of the New World would inflame a race of bards to unprecedented utterance. "What are the Tibers and Scamanders," he demanded, "measured by the Missouri and the Amazon? Or what the loveliness of Illysus or Avon by the Connecticut or the Potomac? Whenever a nation wills it, prodigies are born." That is to say, prodigies literary and ineffable as well as purely material—prodigies aimed, in his own words, at "the olympic crown" as well as at mere railroads, ships, wheat-fields, droves of hogs, factories and money. Nor were even Knapp and Channing the first of the haruspices. Noah Web-

ster, the lexicographer, who "taught millions to spell but not one to sin," had seen the early starlight of the same Golden Age so early as 1789, as the curious will find by examining his "Disquisitions on the English Language," a work fallen long since into undeserved oblivion. Nor was Whitman, taking sober second thought a century later, the last of them until Sandburg. Out of many other seers of our own day, extravagantly articulate in print and among the chautauquas, I choose one—not because his hope is of purest water, but precisely because, like Emerson, he dilutes it with various discreet whereases. He is Van Wyck Brooks, a young man far more intelligent, penetrating and hospitable to fact than any of the reigning professors—a critic who is sharply differentiated from them, indeed, by the simple circumstance that he has information and sense. Yet this extraordinary Mr. Brooks, in his "Letters and Leadership," published in 1918, rewrites "The American Scholar" in terms borrowed almost bodily from "Democratic Vistas"—that is to say, he prophesies with Emerson and exults with Whitman. First there is the Emersonian doctrine of the soaring individual made articulate by freedom and realizing "the responsibility that lies upon us, each in the measure of his own gift." And then there is Whitman's vision of a self-interpretative democracy, forced into high literary adventures by Joseph Conrad's "obscure, inner necessity," and so achieving "a new synthesis adaptable to the unique conditions of our life." And finally there is the specific prediction, the Adam Forepaugh mirage: "We shall become a luminous people, dwelling in the light and sharing our light." . . .

As I say, the roll of such soothsayers might be almost endlessly lengthened. There is, in truth, scarcely a formal discourse upon the national letters (forgetting, perhaps, Barrett Wendell's sour threnody upon the New England *Aufklärung*) that is without some touch of this provisional exultation, this confident hymning of glories to come, this

fine Sandburgian assurance that American literature, in some future always ready to dawn, will burst into so grand a flowering that history will cherish its loveliest blooms even above such salient American gifts to culture as the moving-picture, the phonograph, the New Thought and the bichloride tablet. If there was ever a dissenter from the national optimism, in this as in other departments, it was surely Edgar Allan Poe—without question the bravest and most original, if perhaps also the least orderly and judicious of all the critics that we have produced. And yet even Poe, despite his general habit of disgust and dismay, caught a flash or two of that engaging picture—even Poe, for an instant in 1846, thought that he saw the beginnings of a solid and autonomous native literature, its roots deep in the soil of the republic—as you will discover by turning to his forgotten essay on J. G. C. Brainard, a thrice-forgotten doggereler of Jackson's time. Poe, of course, was too cautious to let his imagination proceed to details; one feels that a certain doubt, a saving peradventure or two, played about the unaccustomed vision as he beheld it. But, nevertheless, he unquestionably beheld it. . . .

II

Now for the answering fact. How has the issue replied to these visionaries? It has replied in a way that is manifestly to the discomfiture of Emerson as a prophet, to the dismay of Poe as a pessimist disarmed by transient optimism, and to the utter collapse of Whitman. We have, as everyone knows, produced no such "new and greater literatus order" as that announced by old Walt. We have given a gaping world no books that "radiate," and surely none intelligibly comparable to stars and constellations. We have achieved no prodigies of the first class, and very few of the second class, and not many of the third and fourth classes. Our literature, despite several false starts that promised much, is chiefly remarkable, now as always, for

its respectable mediocrity. Its typical great man, in our own time, has been Howells, as its typical great man a generation ago was Lowell, and two generations ago, Irving. Viewed largely, its salient character appears as a sort of timorous flaccidity, an amiable hollow-ness. In bulk it grows more and more formidable, in ease and decorum it makes undoubted progress, and on the side of mere technic, of the bald capacity to write, it shows an ever-widening competence. But when one proceeds from such agencies and externals to the intrinsic substance, to the creative passion within, that substance quickly reveals itself as thin and watery, and that passion fades to something almost puerile.

In all that mass of suave and often highly diverting writing there is no visible movement toward a distinguished and singular excellence, a signal national quality, a ripe and stimulating flavor, or, indeed, toward any other describable goal. What one sees is simply a general irresolution, a pervasive superficiality. There is no sober grappling with fundamentals, but only a shy sporting on the surface; there is not even any serious approach, such as Whitman dreamed of, to the special experiences and emergencies of the American people. When one turns to any other national literature—to Russian literature, say, or French, or German, or Scandinavian—one is conscious immediately of a definite attitude toward the primary mysteries of existence, the unsolved and ever-fascinating problems at the bottom of human life, and of a definite preoccupation with some of them, and a definite way of translating their challenge into drama. These attitudes and preoccupations raise a literature above mere poetizing and tale-telling; they give it dignity and importance; above all they give it national character. But it is precisely here that the literature of America, and especially the later literature, is most colorless and inconsequential. As if paralyzed by the national fear of ideas, the democratic distrust of whatever strikes beneath the prevailing

platitudes, it evades all resolute and honest dealing with what, after all, must be every healthy literature's elementary materials. One is conscious of no brave and noble earnestness in it, of no generalized passion for intellectual and spiritual adventure, of no organized determination to think things out. What is there is chiefly a highly self-conscious and insipid correctness, a bloodless respectability, a submergence of matter in manner—in brief, what is there is the feeble, uninspiring quality of German painting and English music.

It was so in the great days and it is so today. There has always been hope, and there has always been failure. Even the most optimistic prophets of future glories have been united, at all times, in their discontent with the here and now. "The mind of this country," said Emerson, speaking of what was currently visible in 1837, "is taught to aim at low objects. . . . There is no work for any but the decorous and the complaisant. . . . Books are written . . . by men of talent . . . who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles." And then, turning to the way out: "The office of the scholar [*i. e.*, of Whitman's literatus] is to cheer, to raise and to guide men by showing them *facts amid appearances*." Whitman himself, a full generation later, found that office still unfilled. "Our fundamental want today in the United States," he said, "with closest, amplest reference to present conditions, and to the future, is of a class, and the clear idea of a class, of native authors, literatuses, far *different*, far *higher in grade*, than any yet known"—and so on, as I have already quoted him. Finally, there is Brooks, with nine-tenths of his book given over, not to his prophecy—it is crowded, indeed, into the last few pages—but to a somewhat heavy mourning over the actual scene before him. On the side of letters, the æsthetic side, the side of ideas, we present to the world at large, he says, "the spectacle of a vast, undifferentiated herd of good-humored animals"—Knights of Pythias, Presbyterians,

standard model Ph. D.'s, readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, admirers of Richard Harding Davis and O. Henry, devotees of Hamilton Wright Mabie's "white list" of books, members of the Y. M. C. A. or of the Drama League, weepers at chautauquas, wearers of badges, children of God.

Nevertheless, Sandburg, drowsing there in Hinky Dink's living tomb, still hopes and believes. A man of faith, indeed! No doubt he is also convinced that the Prohibitionists, having their hoofs upon our necks, will presently let us up humanely, and give us back our beer, and so make us happy and free again, and to fill the land with glad hosannahs!

III

SEVERAL times in the past, discussing the national letters in these pages, I have called attention to the foreignness that hangs about many American books of the better sort. When one reads a machine-made boob-bumper by O. Henry one gets a native flavor from every line of it, but when one turns to such a piece as Stephen Crane's "The Blue Hotel," or Hergesheimer's "Java Head," or Cabell's "Jurgen," or even Anderson's "Winesburg, Ohio," one acquires a sneaking feeling that the thing, after all, must be a translation. When the professors want to give Dreiser an extra vigorous thwack they accuse him, perhaps more or less justly, of being Russian. Cabell is full of French poisons. So is Hergesheimer. So was Ambrose Bierce. So was Henry James. I know a critic who always refers to Willa Cather as "the Swede"; it is his notion that her skill is founded upon the morbid and often downright gruesome magic of the North, by Ibsen out of the long winter nights.

This foreignness, it seems to me, is always more or less real. The American author who shows any genuine force is almost invariably found to be under strong exotic influences, usually English, but sometimes far more remote. In the absence of a native culture, he

turns to whatever foreign culture is most hospitable to his soul. It has been so since the earliest days. Freneau, the poet of the Revolution and the first American literatus to rise above the *Ayers' Almanac* level, was thoroughly French in blood and traditions. Irving, as H. R. Haweis has said, "took to England as a duck takes to water," and was in exile seventeen years. Cooper, with the great success of "The Last of the Mohicans" behind him, left the country in disgust and was gone for seven years. Emerson, Bryant, Lowell, Hawthorne and even Longfellow, kept their eyes turned across the water; Emerson, in fact, was little more than an importer and popularizer of German and French ideas. Bancroft studied in Germany; Prescott, like Irving, was enchanted by Spain. Poe, unable to follow the fashion, invented mythical travels to save his face—to France, to Germany, to the Greek isles, to hell itself. The Civil War revived the national consciousness enormously, but it did not halt the movement of *émigrés*. Henry James, in the seventies, went to England, Bierce and Bret Harte followed him, and even Mark Twain, horribly American though he was, was forever pulling up stakes and setting out for Vienna, Florence or London. Only poverty tied Whitman to the soil; his audience, for many years, was chiefly beyond the water, and there, too, he often longed to be.

This distaste for the national scene was and is often based upon a genuine racial alienness. The more, indeed, one investigates the ancestry of Americans who have won distinction in the fine arts, the more one discovers tempting game for the critical Know Nothings. Whitman was half Dutch, Harte was half Jew, Poe was partly German, James had an Irish grandfather, Howells was largely Irish and German, Dreiser is German, and Hergesheimer is Pennsylvania Dutch. Fully a half of the painters discussed in John C. van Dyke's "American Painting and Its Tradition" were of mixed blood, with the Anglo-Saxon plainly recessive. And of the five poets singled out for en-

comium by Miss Lowell in "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry," one is a Swede, two are partly German, and one was educated in the German language, and three of the five exiled themselves to England as soon as they got out of their nonage. The exiles are of all sorts: Frank Harris, Vincent O'Sullivan, Ezra Pound, Herman Scheffauer, T. S. Eliot, Henry B. Fuller, Stuart Merrill, Edith Wharton. They go to England, France, Germany, Italy—anywhere to escape. Even at home the literatus is perceptibly foreign in his mien. If he lies under the New England tradition he is furiously colonial—more English than the English. If he turns to revolt, he is apt to put on a French hat and a Russian red blouse. *The Little Review*, the organ of the extreme wing of *révoltés*, is so violently exotic that several years ago, during the plupatriotic days of the war, some of its readers protested. With characteristic lack of humor it replied with an American number—and two of the stars of that number bore the fine old Anglo-Saxon names of Ben Hecht and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.

IV

THIS tendency of American literature, the moment it begins to show enterprise, novelty and significance, to radiate an alien smell is not an isolated phenomenon. The same smell accompanies practically all other sorts of intellectual activity in the republic. Whenever one hears that a new political theory is in circulation, or a scientific heresy, or a movement toward rationalism in religion, it is always safe to guess that some discontented stranger or other has a hand in it. In the newspapers and on the floor of Congress a new heterodoxy is always denounced forthwith as a product of foreign plotting, and here public opinion undoubtedly supports both the press and the politicians, and with good reason. The native culture of the country—that is, the culture of the low caste Anglo-Saxons who maintain the national tradition—is almost com-

pletely incapable of producing ideas. It is a culture that roughly corresponds to what the culture of England would be if there were no universities over there, and no caste of intellectual individualists and no landed aristocracy—in other words, if the tone of the national thinking were set by the nonconformist industrials, the camorra of Welsh and Scotch political scoundrels, and the town and country mobs. The United States has not yet produced anything properly describable as an aristocracy, and so there is no impediment to this domination of the inferior orders. Worse, the Anglo-Saxon strain, second-rate at the start, has tended to degenerate steadily to lower levels—in New England, very markedly. The result is that there is not only a great dearth of ideas in the land, but also an active and relentless hostility to ideas. The chronic suspiciousness of the inferior man here has full play; never in modern history has there been another civilization showing so vast a body of prohibitions and repressions in both conduct and thought. The second result is that intellectual experimentation is chiefly left to the immigrants of the later migrations, and to the small sections of the native population that have been enriched with their blood. For such a pure Anglo-Saxon as Cabell to disport himself in the field of ideas is a rarity in the United States—and no exception to the rule that I have just mentioned, for Cabell belongs to an aristocracy that is now almost extinct, and has no more in common with the general population than a Baltic baron has with the indigenous herd of Letts and Esthonians. All the arts in America are thus thoroughly exotic. Music is almost wholly German or Italian, painting is French, literature may be anything from English to Russian, architecture (save when it becomes a mere branch of engineering) is a maddening phantasmagoria of borrowings. Even so elemental an art as that of cookery shows no native development, and is greatly disesteemed by Americans of the Anglo-Saxon majority; any decent restaurant

that one blunders upon in the land is likely to be French, and if not French, then Italian or German or Chinese. So with the sciences: they have scarcely any native development. Organized scientific research began in the country with the founding of the Johns Hopkins University, a bald imitation of the German universities, and long held suspect by native opinion. Even after its great success, indeed, there was rancorous hostility to its scheme of things on chauvinistic grounds, and some years ago efforts were begun to Americanize it, with the result that it is now sunk to the level of Princeton, Amhurst and other such glorified high-schools, and has begun to be dominated by native savants who would be laughed at in any Continental university. Science, oppressed by such assaults from below, moves out of the academic groove into the freer air of the great foundations, where the pursuit of the shy fact is uncontaminated by football and social pushing. The greatest of these foundations is the Rockefeller Institute. Its salient men are such investigators as Flexner, Loeb and Carrel—all of them foreign Jews.

Thus the battle of ideas in the United States is largely carried on under strange flags, and even the stray natives on the side of free inquiry have to sacrifice some of their nationality when they enlist. The effects of this curious condition of affairs are both good and evil, but chiefly evil. In the foreground, plain to all, is the tendency of the beginning literatus, once he becomes fully conscious of his foreign affiliations, to desert the republic forthwith, and thereafter view it from afar, and as an actual foreigner. More solid and various cultures lure him; he finds himself uncomfortable at home. Sometimes, as in the case of Henry James, he becomes a downright expatriate, and a more or less active agent of anti-American feeling; more often, he goes over to the outlanders without yielding up his theoretical citizenship, as in the cases of Irving, Harris, Pound and O'Sullivan. All this, of course, works relatively light damage, for not many native

authors are footloose enough to indulge in any such physical desertion of the soil. Of much more evil importance is the tendency of the cultural alienism that I have described to fortify the uncontaminated native in his bilious suspicion of all the arts, and particularly of all artists. The news that the latest poet to flutter the dovescotes is a Jew, or that the last novelist mauled by comstockery has a German or Scandinavian or Russian name, or that the critic newly taken in sacrilege is a partisan of Viennese farce or of the French moral code or of English literary theory—this news, among a people so ill-informed, so horribly well-trained in flight from bugaboos, and so savagely suspicious of the unfamiliar in ideas has the inevitable effect of stirring up oppo-

sition that quickly ceases to be purely æsthetic objection, and so becomes increasingly difficult to combat. If Dreiser's name were Tompkins or Simpson, there is no doubt whatever that he would affright the professors a good deal less, and appear less of a hobgoblin to the *intelligentsia* of the women's clubs. If Oppenheim were less palpably levantine, he would come much nearer to the popularity of Edwin Markham and Walt Mason. And if Cabell kept to the patriotic business of a Southern gentleman, to wit, the praise of General Robert E. Lee, instead of prowling the strange and terrible fields of medieval Provence, it is a safe wager that he would be sold openly over the counter instead of stealthily behind the door.



Ultima Thule

By *Leslie Nelson Jennings*

WHAT have they left us to toil for? Where are the yokes and whips?
Broken and unrecalled, even the gods are dead:
Thoth and Osiris and Isis—and Memnon, with sealed lips . . .
We name their names unmoved by ecstasy or dread.

Is there no king to command us—to break us on the wheel?
Is there none left to dare bring Beauty back to power?
Ah, for some pitiless master, and rods to make us feel
Worthy the mason's work, triumphant for an hour!

We, who have built them their cities! we, who have torn them down—
What if we cringe and say: Dust is the end of all;
What if we sift through our fingers the sand, and find a crown?
Are there no walls, no towers, so high they cannot fall?

Shadows, we pluck at the cerements, knock at the granite house,
Crying: Awake, O Lord, lest Egypt be forgot!
But we, who are empty-handed, can find no word to rouse
Those who have slept so long, dreaming, we know not what!



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